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Irving Howe

Thoughts After Watergate

About the "ultimate" meaning of Watergate we cannot be certain. Should we regard it as a transient stain on the Republic which time will blur, as it has blurred so many others? Or does it constitute a new *kind* of evidence for the view, expressed occasionally in these pages, that we are experiencing a social and moral unraveling, a coming-apart of social binders, a crisis of discipline and belief?

Intellectuals have an occupational fault: they overinterpret. Give them a sunset and it becomes the decline of the West. But there are nonintellectuals who have an opposite fault, habitual if not occupational. Give them the decline of the West and they talk serenely about sunsets. Or they say: "it's just the same old stuff, there have always been thieves down in Washington. . . ."

Let's try for a point of balance.

I

THE WATERGATE REVELATIONS show that for several years now there has been at work within the federal government a process we might call Caesarism; or if Roman analogies are displeasing, we can compare this process to de Gaulle's acquisition of power in France. Within the Nixon administration, undertaken by a crucial portion of the Nixon administration, and with at least the tacit acquiescence of Nixon himself, there was gradually created an extralegal or quasi-illegal center of power (perhaps even a "dual power"). For the sake of convenience let's call this center of power the Praetorian Guard, after the elite corps of bodyguards, independent of the army, which protected Roman emperors.

Our Praetorian Guard was devoted both to politics and protection. It was composed of true-believing Nixonites, who yielded their primary loyalties not to the Republican or any other party but to the Emperor himself. One of the most notable aspects of Ehrlichman's testimony was the way he took it for granted that the Nixon administration would/should secretly support certain like-minded Democrats in Southern elections, rather than Republicans. For the Praetorian Guard was "above" ordinary party politics, often scoffing at Republican congressmen both to its left and right. Indeed, a major element of the Praetorian system is its inclination to undo and supersede the party system.

The Praetorian Guard set itself up in opposition to both the Congress and the governmental bureaucracy. It was deeply scornful of both these institutions, regarding them as slow, legalistic, sluggish, unresponsive. Congressmen and bureaucrats seemed unable or unwilling to learn the methods of the "new" mass politics involving large-scale manipulation by advertising agencies and "dirty tricks." The Praetorian Guard saw the routine agencies of government as blind to the national "crisis," which required extraordinary and not-so-nice measures to defend the country and reelect Nixon: self-evidently, inseparable propositions.

Here a distinction should be made that is of some importance. Certain commentators, either seeking analytic depth or intent upon

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deflecting popular anger from the Nixon administration, have noted that for several decades now there has been a steady increase in the power of the executive; that this increase occurred under both Republican and Democratic administrations; and that it is myopic or narrowly partisan simply to denounce the growth of executive power under Nixon without also denouncing its earlier manifestations since at least Franklin Roosevelt. Very well. Let us grant that there is a portion of truth in this view. Still, we ought to distinguish between the gradual accretion of power to the executive branch, a tendency present in all modern governments, and the *usurpation* of power by a presidential clique within the executive branch. Both of these occurred during the Nixon years; both, probably, in previous administrations. But they are not the same, and to insist that they are is to blur the monstrousness of what Watergate reveals. Yes, there were deplorable acts by previous administrations, some legal and others probably not; and these should be criticized, whether committed by Eisenhower, Kennedy or Johnson. But Watergate showed something which, if it had occurred previously, had not occurred on nearly so large and deliberate a scale. Watergate showed a planned and illegal aggrandizement of power within the government, by a portion of the government—that is, by those executive appointees I have called the Praetorian Guard.

II

LET US TRY to summon a picture, drawn from the Watergate testimony, of how this Praetorian Guard functioned.

At its top were men who were evidently working their way toward an authoritarian *Weltanschauung*. If you heeded Ehrlichman's testimony, and Haldeman's to a lesser extent, you would have to conclude that the president of the United States is an absolute monarch elected every four years. These men—Mitchell, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, others—are hard-souled, barely troubled by humane considerations, and with only the slightest visible attachment to the democratic ethos. What their outlook really comes to is a kind of "authoritarian democracy": the forms remain democratic, the content becomes increasingly authoritarian.

Ehrlichman, I would go a step further, has the mind of a protofascist. Over the years we of DISSENT have resisted the notion that anyone whom we greatly dislike in American politics should be called a fascist—to do that is imprecise, dangerous, self-defeating. There are mindless conservatives or brutal reactionaries who are not, by any stretch of definition, fascists. But with Ehrlichman, as he came through at the hearings, one begins to feel a little uncertain. The worship of authority, the habit of unconditional obedience, the contempt for dissidents, the readiness to justify all kinds of brutal and illegal methods in the name of "national security"—these, if not yet fascist, are certainly getting there.

If it is a mistake to bandy the word fascist, it is equally a mistake to assume that the only legitimate image of the fascist is a bully with boots and swastika, wielding a whip and cowing inmates of a concentration camp. Fascists can be more suave than that; they can wear gray suits, they can be teetotalers, they can be corporation lawyers. Whether Ehrlichman is or is not a fascist seems to me a trivial matter; but that he represents a drift toward authoritarian thought and sensibility, which was powerful in the White House, is anything but a trivial matter.

Then there were the young assistants (the Magruders, the Odles, and other crew-cut noodles), drawn to the Praetorian Guard by visions of a rapid ascent to power, by the pos-

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CHILE

This issue of DISSENT goes to press shortly after the military coup against the Allende government in Chile. Whether or not inspired by the U.S., the coup is a savage blow against democracy in South America.

In our next issue we shall comment in detail.

—Ed.

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sible pleasure of mingling with the "great" (who wouldn't perjure for the privilege of riding in the same plane with John Mitchell and H. R. Haldeman?), and by an atmosphere of tension, secrecy, urgency: a mixture of conspiratorial excitement and fraternity *Kameradschaft*. Herbert Porter, one of the small fry who broke the law for the glory of Richard Nixon, is very revealing on this:

> There definitely did exist [at the White House] a "we-they" attitude, "we" being anyone inside the gate, "they" being all others, particularly the press, and of course the opposition party. On my first or second day at the White House, Dwight Chapin said to me, "One thing you should realize early on, we are practically an island here." That was the way the world was viewed. [*New York Times,* August 5, 1973]

Still, if you were in or near the Praetorian Guard—and you couldn't exactly tell whether you were near or in, it depended on being tested with special missions—you had to conform to a semimilitary discipline, so much more bracing than the moral sloppiness that was spreading across the country. Working for Colonel Haldeman and Major Ehrlichman, you had to shape up because you were a soldier in battle —and, like all soldiers, subject to call at 4 AM for a night attack.

The Praetorian Guard drew primarily upon a recent major American experience for its methods, material, and personnel. Also, for its intellectual justification. It took over the shoddier tactics of the Cold War and applied them to domestic politics. It worked on the premise that the methods used in fighting external "enemies" were appropriate and necessary to fighting internal "enemies"—since (the assumption became stronger and stronger) there was a clear line of continuity between enemies abroad and enemies at home. The methods the Praetorian Guard used, from forging documents to breaking and entering, were the methods that every secret service and counterintelligence agency uses routinely. Some of the Watergate defendants were actually trained by the CIA—not very well, thank heaven! To a Bernard Barker or a Howard Hunt, and, evidently, to a John Ehrlichman, how much difference did it finally make whether you were breaking into the office of a leftist politician in Latin America or of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in California? In both cases there were felt to be urgent reasons of national security: and the less specific the reasons, the more urgently were they felt.

To apply the methods of the Cold War to domestic politics signified some remarkable premises. Not all the leaders of the Praetorian Guard grasped these premises explicitly, but Ehrlichman evidently did. The opposition party was no longer to be regarded as legitimate within the American political system, with rights, privileges, and courtesies owed to it. That party might have to be tolerated, but certainly no more. And mind: it was not just the McGovern wing of the Democratic party that was so regarded by the Praetorian Guard, it was the Democratic party as a whole. That the McGovern wing should be seen as an ideological foe that had to be destroyed (destroyed, not defeated) in the election is obvious. After all, if George Meany and some of his social democratic admirers could speak of McGovern as a "kook," why should the Praetorian Guard be more refined in its perceptions? Mitchell, Ehrlichman, Haldeman and all they represented were not exactly inclined to make "fine distinctions" between the New Politics that was behind McGovern and the New Left that was not.

What is still more noteworthy than the "delegitimation" of the McGovern candidacy is that the same approach was applied to large portions of the Democratic party (not least of all its chairman, Larry O'Brien, whose desk was imagined to house the most fascinating of secrets . . .). The Praetorian Guard worked slyly toward enabling McGovern to get the Democratic nomination, for it feared that Muskie would be a stronger opponent. And so it applied to Muskie some of its most loathsome methods. Yet Muskie was certainly not a man of the New Politics, certainly not the kind of ideological foe that McGovern was perceived to be.

III

THAT THE PRAETORIAN GUARD made Muskie one of its major victims suggests it had worked itself up to the persuasion not merely that Nixon's victory was desirable or urgent, but that it was "imperative." Imperative, first of all, for the health and prosperity of the Praetorian Guard. Power tastes sweet, and a nibble

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has been known to arouse the appetite for more. It must have been exhilarating to move from a second-rank advertising agency to second-in-command at the White House; a heady thing to be elevated from corporation lawyer to secret emissary for the President. But there was more than the urge to power, the instinct for self-aggrandizement. There was a mission: Nixon had to be reelected in order to save the country.

To save it from what? Well, you know . . . from decay, corruption, sloth, hippies, addicts, eggheads, student demonstrators, kooks. . .

Between the Praetorian vision of things and the New Left vision there was a curious relationship. The Praetorian Guard accepted as reality the New Left fantasies of immediate revolution; it found in the rantings of the Haydens, the Cleavers, the Newtons a reinforcement of its worst *and most cherished* fears; it agreed with the New Left as to the feebleness and rot of the "mushy liberals"; it stood the New Left ideology on its head and made it into the ideology of a New Right.

So the Praetorian Guard brought the Cold War to America. It also drew—but here one's head starts to spin—on the experiences of underground political movements. You put through phone calls only in public booths, you meet strangers in hotel lobbies and hand them sealed envelopes, you hold a rendezvous in a public park where you're not likely to be recognized. A powerful segment of the American government had taken to the methods of underground work in order to combat established positions and procedures of that very same government! Talk about American inventiveness—where else can you find precedents for that?

Less exalted comparisons also suggest themselves. One night during the Watergate hearings I went to see a movie called *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*. It's the kind of movie Hollywood does well: unpretentious, fairly realistic, without moral claims. Robert Mitchum plays a down-at-the-heels thief in the Boston area, getting on in years, entangled with police informers, still intent on pulling off a few more jobs . . . and, good lord, the patience and planning needed for getting a fresh supply of guns, the secret meetings that have to be arranged, the precautions taken, for transmitting the stuff . . . Why, it was just like Herb Kalmbach coming all the way from California to pass some money on to that ex-cop from New York . . . With the exception that Mitchum was smarter than Chuck Colson and didn't write memoranda.

So far as we can tell, most of the Praetorian Guard consisted of standard, indeed standardized middle-class Americans: young lawyers, young advertising men, most of them moral zombies who did what they were told because they were (so they later said) "loyal." Robert Porter, asked why he had not consulted his conscience, answered:

> If you question too much you find yourself out in left field, and that's true not just in government but in business. It is much easier to say, "I'll help you out."

Not very rich at all but coming into increasingly frequent (and ultimately useful) contact with the rich; not very powerful but sidling up to men who really had power, the younger cadres of the Praetorian Guard were swept along by emotions and sensations not so different, one supposes, from those of candidates for the Central Committee of the Communist party, U.S.S.R., or similar functionaries in fascist parties in Europe and elsewhere. They were "team players" —and, in a mild sort of way, they do seem to illustrate Hannah Arendt's notion about "the banality of evil." *

What was the relationship of the Praetorian Guard to Big Business, to the corporation executives and the upper bourgeoisie? More information is needed on this fascinating question, and perhaps it will come out in the second and third portions of the Senate committee's investigation. (I find myself wishing, parenthetically, that our old friend and critic C. Wright

---

* They also should put to rest illusions, whether hopes or fears, about the transforming impact of American education. These young men were all college graduates, some of them from the "better" schools, where they listened, no doubt, to their liberal or even radical professors. They probably even took notes. But when they got into "the real world"—the world in which Maury Stans and Herb Kalmbach knew how to raise money—whatever they had learned, if anything, in college soon faded away, and they lived, as under the circumstances they had to, by the ethic of the Praetorian Guard.

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Mills were still alive: what rich material for studying the strata of the power elite!)

A few preliminary impressions suggest themselves. The Praetorian Guard served both as agent of big money and as parasite upon it. Services were rendered to the dairy industry, to airline corporations, to ITT. The Nixonites were ideologically devoted to corporate America, and some of them must have hoped, reasonably enough, to find comfortable berths in its bureaucracy once they had finished government service. In turn, for favors rendered—antitrust suits not pursued, special franchises secured, price rises approved—they expected financial support. And they got it. When Herb Kalmbach picked up the phone to get to the president of a California aviation company, he quickly arranged for a gift of $50,000 without even having to say what the money was for. The president of the company probably didn't want to know, he was just making a payoff to those Washington characters (flunkies and pests at the same time) in the way a corner grocer makes his payoff to the cops. The corporation president had the money in his drawer, ready in cash. And the same was true, cash or not, for the president of American Airlines and God knows who else.

It is a lovely illustration of the interdependence of capitalist class and political bureaucracy, the latter serving the interests of the former while battening off, and no doubt annoying, them. Still, the corporation executives seem to have recognized that they were getting their money's worth. They are much too intelligent to suppose that McGovern was really going to bring socialism to America, but they feared, more realistically, that he might raise their taxes. And they supported the man who promised them protection, as well as all the little creeps who'd sneak in once in a while for a handout.

What the hell! It doesn't pay to be cheap—if you want protection, you have to pay for it.

IV

IF THE PRAETORIAN GUARD was characterized by the sleaziness of its methods, we would be making a serious error in supposing that it regarded itself as anything but serious in purpose. It acted for more than personal or group interest. Let me put my supposition in extreme form: Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, and the rest saw themselves as high officers in a crusade. And, as historians have by now made clear, the Crusades used some pretty dirty methods. Don't for a moment suppose that when Ehrlichman made his little speech about family morality and drunkenness, he was engaged in a mere cynical pitch. If he had been, it would not have been as alarming as it was. All other things being equal, sincerity is always more dangerous than hypocrisy in authoritarian types. Neither Haldeman nor Ehrlichman would make a good Tammany ward boss or an effective aide of Richard Daley: they are too stiff-necked, too righteous, too deficient in humor. No; the Praetorian Guard saw itself as protector of the nation. It saw itself as defending—virtue.

But what of Nixon, who has so often been described as a canny unprincipled politician—can he also be seen as a committed ideologue? I think so. Nixon's whole career, his "training" in campaigns against Helen Gahagan Douglas and in the McCarthyite era, shows a capacity for a skillful union of the opportunist and the ideologue. It was a union of form and content.

What now? The Praetorian Guard has been shattered, and some of its stalwarts face indictment, perhaps imprisonment. But it would be foolish to suppose that revelation, necessary as that is, and punishment will settle the matter. Nor is there the slightest reason to accede to the appeals for "national reconciliation" which come every Sunday from James Reston, the chaplain of the *New York Times*. The Watergate issue must be kept alive, until every possible fact is discovered. And then the larger problems that it raises, from electoral process to governmental structure, must be debated. The most crucial questions cannot yet be answered: what is the public response? what do ordinary people think and feel about all this? are they worried, frightened, upset, or do they dismiss it as "just politics"? is there a sense abroad that some of the better traditions of the Republic have been deeply violated? Finally, the meaning of Watergate will reveal itself, not merely through the facts that are disclosed but the responses they evoke. And about those it is still too soon to speak. □

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H. W. Benson

Democracy & Union Conglomerates

A Report on Recent Trends in the NMU

At the corner of 15th Street and Union Square West, on June 1, James Morrissey and Ralph Ibrahim, two seamen, watched outside the Amalgamated Bank while bags of ballots were loaded from the vault onto a truck for delivery to the National Maritime Union headquarters where they were to be counted by the Honest Ballot Association. NMU members had voted for national officers by mail during April and May. Morrissey had been bucking the Curran administration since 1966 when he ran for national secretary-treasurer, the union's second highest post. Ibrahim had been at it since 1960, when he ran for New York port agent against the official slate and then complained to the Labor Department that the election had been illegal (that, belonging more to history than to current events, was when James P. Mitchell served as secretary of labor under Eisenhower).

Joseph Curran, NMU president since its founding in 1937, retired in 1973. The administration ticket was headed by Shannon Wall, former national secretary-treasurer. The opposition ticket, the Committee for NMU Democracy, ran Morrissey for president and Ibrahim for secretary-treasurer. The *Call,* a tabloid published by the Morrissey reformers, said they were "trying to do for seamen what Arnold Miller and the Miners for Democracy did for miners." By June 5, when the ballots were tallied, it was clear they had not succeeded. A total of 22,613 votes were cast, Wall receiving 14,396 votes and Morrissey 5,338.

Morrissey and Ibrahim failed as candidates, but they have had spectacular success as reformers. When Ibrahim ran in 1960, the NMU officialdom had already begun to seal itself off from the possibility of challenge. By the time Morrissey made his first run in 1966, fewer than 500 of the NMU's 50,000 members were even remotely eligible to run for top office. (A year later, the number had dropped to 400.) Only those could become candidates who had already served as *full-time staff members,* which meant they could emerge only from within the officialdom itself. And that is about perfect as a definition of a self-perpetuating oligarchy.

Ibrahim in 1960, then Morrissey in 1966, then the reform ticket in 1969, and again in 1973—all forced a change in the constitutional structure. The administration remains in power, but it is now subject to challenge. In 1973 almost every voting and working member could at least run for top office. There were four opposition candidates for president, including an ultra-radical who denounced Morrissey for appealing to the capitalist courts in defense of union democracy and who picketed Arnold Miller for supporting Morrissey.

In 1949–50, there were mass expulsions

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and men lost their union books without a trial. After the 1966 election, Morrissey was dropped from membership on a contrived technicality, and another oppositionist, Gaston Guyon, was expelled on frame-up charges. Both were reinstated by a federal court. So far, there have been no disciplinary moves against rebels stemming from the 1973 contest.

When the NMU treasury was in trouble in 1968, a $100 tax was imposed on pensioners backed by a threat to cut off the benefits of those who would not pay. With Morrissey's encouragement, pensioners picketed the union, went to court, and defeated the tax.

In 1961, the administration quietly rewarded its hired professional staff by adding them to the elected-officers pension plan, a plan financed by members' dues out of the union treasury. Morrissey stumbled over the facts in 1969 while scrutinizing union records. He went to court and a federal judge ordered several million dollars returned to the union treasury. Curran's assistant, who had resigned with an estimated $100,000 in benefits, was directed to repay the money.

When Curran retired, he promptly applied for almost a million dollars in a combined lump-sum pension and severance payment, a claim that came at an awkward moment, just when seamen's pensions had been cut back and seamen were finding it hard to get jobs. Morrissey's cry of outrage echoed so loud and wide that it moved George Meany, who conceded to reporter John Herling over TV that Curran's demand might be excessive. In the ensuing clamor, Curran backtracked slightly and agreed to accept his pension in periodic installments instead of a single bonanza; but the severance pay he took in a single gulp. In any case, Morrissey had driven the point home: the officials were treating themselves royally while the maritime industry declined.

The reformers shook things up, but they could never have done it by themselves. Without the Landrum-Griffin Act, they would have been as helpless as all the dissidents who preceded them. On the other hand, the law would have been futile without the NMU reformers, since only their continuing pressure has kept government officials from remaining obsequious to NMU officials. "Remaining" is precise in this connection. When Arthur Goldberg was secretary of labor, for example, he sloughed off the rights of NMU members to conciliate Curran. That was just after Ralph Ibrahim had complained to Secretary of Labor James Mitchell who went to court to void the 1960 NMU election, charging that the union had failed to assure a fair election. Before the suit could be resolved, the Democratic administration took office, and John Kennedy appointed Goldberg as secretary of labor. Goldberg hastened to settle the case out of court, within the family so to speak, agreeing to withdraw the suit on Curran's promise to run elections fairly in the future. Everyone was happy except Ibrahim, the original complainant, whom no one bothered to consult when the deal was consummated.

YEARS PASSED, and no government representatives ever appeared to check on the fulfillment of those promises. Goldberg rose to the Supreme Court, went to the UN, ran for governor of New York, and passed into near oblivion without ever looking back on his NMU deal. Without Morrissey, it would all have been forgotten; but when he ran in 1966 he called attention to the broken promises. By this time, a less tractable secretary of labor had taken over, Willard Wirtz. Six years had passed since Goldberg had whisked the whole thing away; but now Morrissey, a hard man to subdue or silence, was busy; and a small public was watching. It would not have been so easy to settle away the reformers' rights a second time.

In any event, Wirtz intervened upon Morrissey's complaint, went to court, where the 1966 election was voided, and a rerun election was held under DOL supervisions in 1969. When that election was over, Curran said this to his NMU National Council:

> . . . about the 5th of April they should either be going into the court to certify it or they should be going into the court and asking that it be set aside again. We have reason to believe that from the cooperation they got, especially from our Secretary-Treasurer who worked like hell with them and kept his cool all through it too, it would be all right. I would never have kept my cool, I'll tell you. Some of those Labor Department officials, the way they were running around there, I would have thrown them right out of the God-damned window, but Shannon Wall kept his cool. . . .

Curran's tough-guy stance takes you behind

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the scenes for a moment; we can understand what he expected from friend Goldberg in 1960 and speculate on what he got. Wall was wise to play it cool in 1969, when times had changed somewhat. He may have had a little difficulty with balky Wirtz, but he got everything he needed from the Labor Department's local man, Benjamin Naumoff. But that's a whole other story.

High on the list in Morrissey's platform was: "Return the union to membership"—a demand with a familiar ring. Regardless of what first triggers rebellion, an opposition quickly reaches the problem of democracy: the officialdom and the union appear to have slipped out of control. While the courts have voided the NMU provisions that restricted candidacy for top office, any shrewd officialdom can devise more acceptable alternative restrictions. Membership control will remain a rallying cry in the NMU, and it means more than fair election of officers, though that, too.

THE REFORMERS want a new method of ratifying contracts. The issue became acute last year after the NMU pension fund was forced to cut back on benefits. Up to then, seamen could retire at any age after 20 years' service; under the reduced plan, they must wait until they are 55 years old regardless of service. You now need 70 days' employment to earn a quarter-year pension credit instead of the previous 50.

The administration inisists that the change was imperative because jobs had been reduced by two-thirds, with a consequent loss of income to the pension fund. In his farewell message Curran wrote, "The fact that the Deep Sea Pension Plan has stood up under the impact of loss of ships and jobs is a tribute to the soundness of the Fund and its administration."

Is he right? The reply is not simple. There is an actuarial question: how much money is needed to maintain a given level of benefits? But there is also a collective bargaining question: should we demand the required level of payment from the employers, and strike if necessary? Curran explained, but after the recent agreement was signed, that to maintain the plan intact would have required so steep a levy on employers that their competitive position would have been undermined. To save jobs, he insists, it was necessary to limit retirement. If seamen had all the facts before the contract was signed, they may have voted to accept it. Morrissey's point, however, is that such decisions are removed from membership control and are made manipulatively by the officials.

According to seamen, contracts are negotiated by the officers and submitted abruptly to branch meetings without much preliminary explanation. At these branch meetings, in the scattered ports of the world, seamen who happen to be ashore vote by a count of hands, with only the scantiest notion of what is involved. The tally is recorded by the presiding officer and sent to NMU headquarters, which announces the result. On the matter of raising the retirement age, Morrissey wrote in the *Call*, "They've been able to get away with it because the membership is never allowed to participate in making decisions." He wants, according to his platform, "Agreements to be ratified by secret ballot after full discussion of contract terms in *Pilot* or *Pilot* supplement."

When Morrissey, then unknown, announced his first candidacy in 1966, letters came from ships' committees and individual seamen, some scrawled by hand, some laboriously typed, some with accompanying cash. During the next seven years, when he protested against neglect of the membership, when he demanded "enforce the contract, settle shipboard beefs promptly, eliminate unjust firings and backdoor shipping, [demand] dignity for seamen," when he called for parity with West Coast wages, there was a sympathetic response. The men aboard ships were clearly pleased that someone was saying these things; the reformers were in tune with a widespread mood. But how widespread? The administration still has a majority. Can it count on the support of most seamen? Is Morrissey plugging a lost cause? Not necessarily. The NMU is changing; most of its members are no longer seafarers.

In 1966, Morrissey got 5,875 votes to Wall's 11,205.

In 1969, Morrissey got 7,317 to Wall's 13,507.

In 1973, Morissey got 5,338; Wall got 14,396; and there were 1,159 votes for three other minor presidential candidates.

The persistent opposition vote is a symptom of rumbling dissatisfaction. And mere arithmetic understates the case. Morrissey's votes, it seems clear, come mostly from seamen who

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go to sea. Their numerical weight inside the NMU has been dropping fast. The combined total of seamen-pensioners and non-seamen shoreside workers is now probably larger than the number of active seamen.

In 1966, there were about 21,500 deep-sea jobs under NMU contract. By 1973, with the decline in American-flag shipping and the demise of the U.S. passenger fleet, the number of jobs dropped to 7,000. In six years, the union lost two-thirds of its seamen's jobs. Back in December 1966, there were 28,400 active seamen available for those 21,500 jobs, By the end of 1971, the active seamen dropped to 20,474. By the time of the election in 1973, that figure had undoubtedly fallen below the 20,000 mark.

Meanwhile the number of pensioners rose from 9,469 in 1968 to 12,618 in December 1971. By election time in 1973, there must have been close to 13,500 seamen on pensions. Pensioners were given the right to vote at the union's convention in 1969 and could vote for the first time in 1973. (Part of Morrissey's election challenge this year charges that voting books were issued illegally to many pensioners.) In the fifties, when the fund got started, pensioners on maximum got $55 a month. Since then, their checks have increased steadily to $250. Why rock the boat? They can express gratitude now with their votes.

With fewer seamen around, the union began to organize non-seamen until by now the number of shoreside workers has probably grown to about one-third the total membership. In Panama alone, there are perhaps 8,000 non-seamen with voting NMU books. Of these about 4,000 voted in 1973, almost all for the administration. The Panama votes were not included in the 1966 tally; they were included in 1969 and 1973.

The NMU reformers remain preoccupied with *seamen's* wages, *seamen's* jobs, and *seamen's* beefs while the base of their union is being transformed; it is like building a structure on sand dunes while the surf undercuts the foundation. The rise in the administration vote this year reflects a change in the character of the electorate.

The decline of the merchant marine and the drastic drop in seafaring jobs cut deeply into NMU power and weakened its financial position. To save money, the union is selling its showpiece National Headquarters Building at 36 Seventh Avenue, Manhattan, to St. Vincent's Hospital for $6 million. In the search for a substitute base of support the NMU administration has turned away from the sea. The place of shoreside workers in the NMU became one of the hot issues of the 1973 campaign.

". . . some years ago, we expanded our organizing activities to shoreside fields," said Curran in his retirement message.

> . . . A prime example of this is our Panama Canal Zone membership. . . . There are also the growing ranks of contract service employees on Army, Navy, and Air Force bases. . . . Our government employees in many areas shoreside are another example. . . . There are some in our union who don't seem to understand this kind of basic trade union responsibility. Therefore they resent the fact that the NMU has accepted the challenge and moved forward to establish our union on a broader basis through shoreside organizing. Instead of recognizing that this is the very lifeblood of an organization—especially when other parts of the industry are afflicted with hard times—there are characters who act like anything done for other workers is taking something away from them.

THE "SOMETHING" the seamen fear is being taken away is nothing less than their own union. In addition to those mentioned by Curran, Morrissey lists pocketbook workers, brassiere workers, laundry workers, and shoe workers—all with the right to vote for seamen's officers and representatives.

In some ways it is bizarre. The NMU is a single national organization without locals. All national officers and agents are elected on a single ballot that goes to all members. In 1973, the voters filled 71 posts, including 5 national officers, 28 port agents, and 38 patrolmen (equivalent to business agents). Every voting member may vote on all 71 posts, so that the vote of a factory worker in Panama helps decide who will be port agent in New York or California. It is as though residents of Westchester County, New York, were to vote for the mayors of Newark and Atlanta.

In a resolution prepared for the 1969 convention, Morrissey wrote that permitting non-seamen to vote on seamen's officers "leads to swamping and flooding of elections through bloc voting by people who have neither connections with nor personal stake in shipboard

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conditions. . . ." He proposes that shoreside workers be organized into autonomous units of the NMU, electing their own officers and collective bargaining representatives.

Seamen are being elbowed aside by an accidental assemblage of miscellaneous workers so that their collective bargaining structure is deformed. Morrissey wants "one man to a foc'sle." Assuming a laundry worker understands, can he possibly care? (What is a foc'sle anyway?)

When one disease is conquered, the executives of a philanthropic institution can move over and campaign against another. When one industry is doing badly, it may not matter to union officials if they shift over to another. But it does matter, critically, to union members. Are the officers who negotiate their contracts dependent upon them or upon someone else? The drift of union leaders away from their original base is not peculiar to the NMU; it is widely evident in the labor movement.

IN THE Painters union, an international officialdom uses miscellaneous crafts to resist democracy in District Council 9, New York. Frank Schonfeld was elected secretary-treasurer in 1967, after a reform upsurge, only to discover that he had position but no authority. Non-housepainter crafts held the balance of power in the delegated District Council. With no interest in painters' conditions, they generally went along with the international against Schonfeld. The international vetoed a council reorganization plan to give self-government to painters while its allies tried illegally to remove him from office, an effort blocked in federal court.

DC 9 is a portent for union painters in the nation. International President S. Frank Raftery, an image-conscious leader, wants to organize anything around. In this, he is not particularly building a *painters* union but rather using painters as a base to create a new and different kind of power. By the time painters wake up, they may discover that, like seamen, they are a minority in their own union and control has somehow slipped away.

The Teamsters union, once a union of truckdrivers, now claims a membership of over 2 million. To reach that figure, it has become a conglomerate with an organizational roster that reads like the categories in an occupational census: novelty workers, court reporters, printers, building superintendents, school administrators, lettuce pickers, mailers, salesmen, and also—truckdrivers. Drivers may already be a minority; surely their relative importance has declined. The Steelworkers union broke through in basic steel; but by now basic steelworkers are outnumbered by men in the fabricating plants. In two contested elections, I. W. Abel was chosen president even though a majority of the basic steel votes were recorded against him. Analogous trends are evident almost everywhere, even in such democratic unions as the United Auto Workers and the United Rubber Workers. When they were based in a single major area, Detroit-Flint for auto and Akron for rubber, rival caucuses and independent conferences could easily reach the unions' main centers. Now that the industries are decentralized and the unions diversified, it becomes a major project to assemble a national grouping against, or even outside, the official structure.

These observations are not intended as a complaint. Unions are driven beyond their "normal" jurisdiction because they need strength. With dues from a million members, a union can back up a long strike that would quickly bankrupt a union of 100,000. Leaders without the zest or ability to extend their sphere find their unions decaying, like the Plasterers, or Furniture Workers and Upholsterers. There is power in sheer numbers, but something is lost.

The American Federation of Labor, historians say, was based on the organization of workers into homogeneous unions in distinct crafts or industries. The Knights of Labor, which it supplanted, was a motley one-big-union combination. What happens to founding principles when printers join the Teamsters; ballpark attendants become Painters; oil refinery workers become Seafarers; coal miners become Operating Engineers? The officialdom, holding together variegated groups without special industry bonds, becomes the only cohesive force able to act, thereby drifting beyond the control of a scattered and diffuse membership. What to do about it?

THE ANTIDOTE to bureaucracy is democracy. The solution lies partly in assuring the right to dissent within the powerful structures, to pro-

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tect due process through public review boards. But, as events in the Painters union and the NMU have demonstrated, dissent is not enough. The exercise of democratic rights becomes futile if the structure of the union leaves nothing to be decided. Within the sprawling structures, for example, certain recognized collective bargaining units must be guaranteed the basic rights of self-government, like painters in the Painters union! Most of all, men like Morrissey and Ibrahim must be able to survive. □

Nicolaus Mills

The Farm Workers Fight It Out

> The Teamster actions are disgraceful. They are clearly union-busting. They are engaged in a concerted campaign to wipe out the United Farm Workers. —GEORGE MEANY

Ever since 1968, Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers have had two principal opponents: the growers who control California's $5 billion-per-year agricultural industry and the Nixon administration, which, through Department of Defense purchases of nonunion grapes and lettuce and National Labor Relations Board attacks on the Farm Workers' right to boycott, has sought to cripple the union.

This year, with the expiration of contracts signed in 1970 at the conclusion of the grape boycott, the Farm Workers acquired a third major opponent: the world's largest and richest union, the 2.2 million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Over the past year the Teamsters took more than 50 contracts from the 60,000-men Farm Workers, and in the coming months that figure is expected to rise. Even the Farm Workers don't deny the damage the Teamsters have caused. "What we accomplished in eight years of organizing is all being wiped out with one stroke of the pen," Cesar Chavez said recently.

Although the current clash between the two unions is their most serious, it is not the first. In 1966, when the Farm Workers were just beginning, the Teamsters sought to oust them from the DiGiorgio Ranch, and in an election supervised by the American Arbitration Association, the Teamsters went down to a stunning 530 to 331 defeat. Since that time *the Teamsters have lost every free election they have had with the Farm Workers,* and in addition lettuce pickers they claimed to represent have gone on strike in protest against Teamster contracts. As a result, in 1967 and again in 1970, the two unions signed jurisdictional agreements. The Farm Workers promised to stay out of such Teamster strongholds as the West Coast cannery industry. The Teamsters in turn promised to abandon organizing field workers.

The Teamsters' violation of those jurisdictional agreements has not been spurred by newfound support among California's migrant workers. The only neutral poll this year—a survey of 1,000 field workers conducted by a delegation of ministers and congressmen—produced the following results: 795 votes for the Farm Workers, 80 for the Teamsters, and 78 for no union at all. The Teamsters are not, however, about to chance the kind of defeat that scuttled their 1966 organizing at DiGiorgio. When asked by a reporter if farm workers should be allowed to choose their union, Teamster President Frank Fitzsimmons replied, "Why should we have an election if we already have the contracts?"

As in the past, the Teamsters and the growers are relying on the chaos of the California labor situation to produce enough workers to break picket lines. Striking Farm Workers have been subjected to bloody attacks by the Teamsters as well as a series of severe restrictions by local judges. In one nine-day period—during which a local judge ruled that strikers had to be 100 feet apart and could only use a bull

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horn one hour out of each day—2,700 protesting Farm Workers were arrested.

Although they have denied that theirs is a "sweetheart" relationship to the growers, Teamster contracts in lettuce and grapes reflect anything but the hard bargaining Jimmy Hoffa was noted for. Most Teamster strategy has been designed to offset what Frank Fitzsimmons, in a speech before the American Farm Bureau, called the "revolutionary" goals of the United Farm Workers. The negative bias of the Teamsters has been duly noted by the California Supreme Court, which, in a decision handed down at the end of 1972, ruled that Farm Workers could not be restrained from picketing growers who had signed with the Teamsters because *legally* there was *no jurisdictional dispute* involved. The Teamsters and the growers had merely acted in collusion to block the Farm Workers' organizing efforts. The Court stated,

> *From a practical point of view, an employer's grant of exclusive bargaining status to a nonrepresentative union must be considered the ultimate form of favoritism, completely substituting the employer's choice of union for his employees' desires.*

The contracts the Teamsters have been signing bear out the Court's observation. Although the difference between the hourly wages of the Farm Workers and the Teamsters is often slight (in the Coachella Valley, Farm Worker contracts were $2.40 an hour and Teamster contracts $2.30), the Teamster contracts have been notably insensitive to the protections farm workers need. Missing from the Teamster contracts, for example, are strong grievance procedures and safeguards against pesticides that have become standard in Farm Worker agreements. Most significant of all, the Teamsters have brought back the contractor system to replace the hiring-hall procedures the Farm Workers introduced to assure that jobs would be awarded on the basis of seniority. Under the contractor system the grower hires a contractor, who in turn supplies a crew of workers to do whatever is required. For the worker, the system is one that subjects him to easy abuse. He is at the mercy of the contractor for his job; and he may be charged for anything from drinking water, to transportation, to a hiring fee. The advantage to the grower is that he has a labor supply that can be controlled with very little effort on his part.

THE FARM WORKERS' BELIEF that the Teamsters' victories can be offset are based on two sets of factors. The first is the Union's tangible assets. The Farm Workers now have a $1.6 million strike fund supplied by the AFL-CIO, and in the major cities across the country their boycott machinery is hard at work. In New York, for example, 300 pickets answered a 5:00 AM call to protest the arrival of non-union grapes at the Hunts Point Terminal. In addition, the Farm Workers expect that grand-jury indictments will soon be handed down to the Teamsters for accepting payments from growers in violation of the Taft-Hartley law forbidding such transactions between an employer and a union. Most of all, however, the Farm Worker's confidence in themselves rests on the knowledge that they are a movement, even more than a union, especially for the Chicano workers who harvest most of California's agriculture. "The strike is not going to be lost even though we may not win it now," Cesar Chavez noted recently. "We'll break them. Don't ask me how long it will take. Five years, ten years. We're very patient." □

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Michael Walzer

In Defense of Equality

At the very center of conservative thought lies this idea: that the present division of wealth and power corresponds to some deeper reality of human life. Conservatives don't want to say merely that the present division is what it ought to be, for that would invite a search for some distributive principle—as if it were possible to *make* a distribution. They want to say that whatever the division of wealth and power is, it naturally is, and that all efforts to change it, temporarily successful in proportion to their bloodiness, must be futile in the end. We are then invited, as in Irving Kristol's recent *Commentary* article, to reflect upon the perversity of those who would make the attempt.[1] Like a certain sort of leftist thought, conservative argument seems quickly to shape itself around a rhetoric of motives rather than one of reasons. Kristol is especially adept at that rhetoric and strangely unconcerned about the reductionism it involves. He aims to expose egalitarianism as the ideology of envious and resentful intellectuals. No one else cares about it, he says, except the "new class" of college-educated, professional, most importantly, professorial men and women, who hate their bourgeois past (and present) and long for a world of their own making.

I suppose I should have felt, after reading Kristol's piece, that the decent drapery of my socialist convictions has been stripped away, that I was left naked and shivering, small-minded and self-concerned. Perhaps I did feel a little like that, for my first impulse was to respond in kind, exposing anti-egalitarianism as the ideology of those other intellectuals—"they are mostly professors, of course"—whose spiritual course was sketched some years ago by the editor of *Commentary*. But that would be at best a degrading business, and I doubt that my analysis would be any more accurate than Kristol's. It is better to ignore the motives of these "new men" and focus instead on what they say: that the inequalities we are all familiar with are inherent in our condition, are accepted by ordinary people (like themselves), and are criticized only by the perverse. I think all these assertions are false; I shall try to respond to them in a serious way.

Kristol doesn't argue that we can't possibly have greater equality or greater inequality than we presently have. Both communist and aristocratic societies are possible, he writes, under conditions of political repression or economic underdevelopment and stagnation. But insofar as men are set free from the coerciveness of the state and from material necessity, they will distribute themselves in a more natural way, more or less as contemporary Americans have done. The American way is exemplary because it derives from or reflects the real inequalities of mankind. Men don't naturally fall into two classes (patricians and plebeians) as conservatives once thought; nor can they plausibly be grouped into a single class (citizens or comrades) as leftists still believe. Instead, "human talents and abilities . . . distribute themselves along a bell-shaped curve, with most people clustered around the middle,

[1] "About Equality," *Commentary*, November 1972.

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and with much smaller percentages at the lower and higher ends." The marvels of social science!—this distribution is a demonstrable fact. And it is another "demonstrable fact that in all modern bourgeois societies, the distribution of income is also along a bell-shaped curve. . . ." The second bell echoes the first. Moreover, once this harmony is established, "the political structure —the distribution of political power—follows along the same way. . . ." At this point, Kristol must add, "however slowly and reluctantly," since he believes that the Soviet economy is moving closer every year to its natural shape, and it is admittedly hard to find evidence that nature is winning out in the political realm. But in the United States, nature is triumphant: we are perfectly bell-shaped.

The first bell is obviously the crucial one. The defense of inequality reduces to these two propositions: that talent is distributed unequally and that talent will out. Clearly, we all want men and women to develop and express their talents, but whenever they are able to do that, Kristol suggests, the bell-shaped curve will appear or reappear, first in the economy, then in the political system. It is a neat argument but also a peculiar one, for there is no reason to think that "human talents and abilities" in fact distribute themselves along a *single* curve, although income necessarily does. Consider the range and variety of human capacities: intelligence, physical strength, agility and grace, artistic creativity, mechanical skill, leadership, endurance, memory, psychological insight, the capacity for hard work—even, moral strength, sensitivity, the ability to express compassion. Let's assume that with respect to all these, most people (but different people in each case) cluster around the middle of whatever scale we can construct, with smaller numbers at the lower and higher ends. Which of these curves is actually echoed by the income bell? Which, if any, ought to be?

There is another talent that we need to consider: the ability to make money, the green thumb of bourgeois society—a secondary talent, no doubt, combining many of the others in ways specified by the immediate environment, but probably also a talent which distributes, if we could graph it, along a bell-shaped curve. Even this curve would not correlate exactly with the income bell because of the intervention of luck, that eternal friend of the untalented, whose most important social expression is the inheritance of property. But the correlation would be close enough, and it might also be morally plausible and satisfying. People who are able to make money ought to make money, in the same way that people who are able to write books ought to write books. Every human talent should be developed and expressed.

The difficulty here is that making money is only rarely a form of self-expression, and the money we make is rarely enjoyed for its intrinsic qualities (at least, economists frown upon that sort of enjoyment). In a capitalist world, money is the universal medium of exchange; it enables the men and women who possess it to purchase virtually every other sort of social good; we collect it for its exchange value. Political power, celebrity, admiration, leisure, works of art, baseball teams, legal advice, sexual pleasure, travel, education, medical care, rare books, sailboats—all these (and much more) are up for sale. The list is as endless as human desire and social invention. Now isn't it odd, and morally implausible and unsatisfying, that all these things should be distributed to people with a talent for making money? And even odder and more unsatisfying that they should be distributed (as they are) to people who have money, whether or not they made it, whether or not they possess any talent at all?

Rich people, of course, always look talented—just as princesses always look beautiful—to the deferential observer. But it is the first task of social science, one would think, to look beyond these appearances. "The

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properties of money," Marx wrote, "are my own (the possessor's) properties and faculties. What I *am* and *can do* is, therefore, not at all determined by my individuality. I *am* ugly, but I can buy the most beautiful woman for myself. Consequently, I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness, its power to repel, is annulled by money. . . . I am a detestable, dishonorable, unscrupulous, and stupid man, but money is honored and so also is its possessor." [2]

It would not be any better if we gave men money in direct proportion to their intelligence, their strength, or their moral rectitude. The resulting distributions would each, no doubt, reflect what Kristol calls "the tyranny of the bell-shaped curve," though it is worth noticing again that the populations in the lower, middle, and upper regions of each graph would be radically different. But whether it was the smart, the strong, or the righteous who enjoyed all the things that money can buy, the oddity would remain: why them? Why anybody? In fact, there is no single talent or combination of talents which plausibly entitles a man to every available social good—and there is no single talent or combination of talents that necessarily must win the available goods of a free society. Kristol's bell-shaped curve is tyrannical only in a purely formal sense. Any particular distribution may indeed be bell-shaped, but there are a large number of possible distributions. Nor need there be a single distribution of all social goods, for different goods might well be distributed differently. Nor again need all these distributions follow this or that talent curve, for in the sharing of some social goods, talent does not seem a relevant consideration at all.

Consider the case of medical care: surely it should not be distributed to individuals because they are wealthy, intelligent, or righteous, but only because they are sick. Now, over any given period of time, it may be true that some men and women won't require any medical treatment, a very large number will need some moderate degree of attention, and a few will have to have intensive care. If that is so, then we must hope for the appearance of another bell-shaped curve. Not just any bell will do. It must be the right one, echoing what might be called the susceptibility-to-sickness curve. But in America today, the distribution of medical care actually follows closely the lines of the income graph. It's not how a man feels, but how much money he has that determines how often he visits a doctor. Another demonstrable fact! Does it require envious intellectuals to see that something is wrong?

There are two possible ways of setting things right. We might distribute income in proportion to susceptibility-to-sickness, or we might make sure that medical care is not for sale at all, but is available to those who need it. The second of these is obviously the simpler. Indeed, it is a modest proposal and already has wide support, even among those ordinary men and women who are said to be indifferent to equality. And yet, the distribution of medical care solely for medical reasons would point the way toward an egalitarian society, for it would call the dominance of the income curve dramatically into question.

II

What egalitarianism requires is that many bells should ring. Different goods should be distributed to different people for different reasons. Equality is not a simple notion, and it cannot be satisfied by a single distributive scheme—not even, I hasten to add, by a scheme which emphasizes need. "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" is a fine slogan with regard to medical care. Tax money collected from all of us in proportion to our resources (these will never correlate exactly with our abilities, but that problem I shall leave aside for now) must pay the doctors who care for those of us who are sick. Other people who deliver similar sorts of social goods should probably

[2] *Early Writings*, trans. T. B. Bottomore (London: Watts, 1963), p. 191.

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be paid in the same way—teachers and lawyers, for example. But Marx's slogan doesn't help at all with regard to the distribution of political power, honor and fame, leisure time, rare books, and sailboats. None of these things can be distributed to individuals in proportion to their needs, for they are not things that anyone (strictly speaking) needs. They can't be distributed in equal amounts or given to whoever wants them, for some of them are necessarily scarce, and some of them can't be possessed unless other people agree on the proper name of the possessor. There is no criteria, I think, that will fit them all. In the past they have indeed been distributed on a single principle: men and women have possessed them or their historical equivalents because they were strong or well-born or wealthy. But this only suggests that a society in which any single distributive principle is dominant cannot be an egalitarian society. Equality requires a diversity of principles, which mirrors the diversity both of mankind and of social goods.

Whenever equality in this sense does not prevail, we have a kind of tyranny, for it is tyrannical of the well-born or the strong or the rich to gather to themselves social goods that have nothing to do with their personal qualities. This is an idea beautifully expressed in a passage from Pascal's *Pensées,* which I am going to quote at some length, since it is the source of my own argument.[3]

> The nature of tyranny is to desire power over the whole world and outside its own sphere.
>
> There are different companies—the strong, the handsome, the intelligent, the devout—and each man reigns in his own, not elsewhere. But sometimes they meet, and the strong and the handsome fight for mastery—foolishly, for their mastery is of different kinds. They misunderstand one another, and make the mistake of each aiming at universal dominion. Nothing can win this, not even strength, for it is powerless in the kingdom of the wise. . . .
>
> *Tyranny.* The following statements, therefore, are false and tyrannical: "Because I am handsome, so I should command respect." "I am strong, therefore men should love me. . . ." "I am . . . etc."
>
> Tyranny is the wish to obtain by one means what can only be had by another. We owe different duties to different qualities: love is the proper response to charm, fear to strength, and belief to learning.

Marx makes a very similar argument in one of the early manuscripts; perhaps he had this *pensée* in mind.

> Let us assume man to be man, and his relation to the world to be a human one. Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust, etc. If you wish to enjoy art you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you wish to influence other people, you must be a person who really has a stimulating and encouraging effect upon others. . . . If you love without evoking love in return, i.e., if you are not able, by the manifestation of yourself as a loving person, to make yourself a beloved person, then your love is impotent and a misfortune.[4]

The doctrine suggested by these passages is not an easy one, and I can expound it only in a tentative way. It isn't that every man should get what he deserves—as in the old definition of justice—for desert is relevant only to some of the exchanges that Pascal and Marx have in mind. Charming men and women don't deserve to be loved: I may love this one or that one, but it can't be the case that I ought to do so. Similarly, learned men don't deserve to be believed: they are believed or not depending on the arguments they make. What Pascal and Marx are say-

[3] I am also greatly indebted to Bernard Williams, in whose essay "The Idea of Equality" (first published in Laslett and Runciman, *Philosophy, Politics and Society,* second series [Oxford: Blackwell, 1962]) a similar argument is worked out. The example of medical care, to which I recur, is suggested by him. The Pascal quote is from J. M. Cohen's translation of *The Pensées* (London and Baltimore: Penguin Classics, 1961), no. 244.

[4] *Early Writings,* pp. 193–94.

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ing is that love and belief can't rightly be had in any other way—can't be purchased or coerced, for example. It is wrong to seek them in any way that is alien to their intrinsic character. In its extended form, their argument is that for all our personal and collective resources, there are distributive reasons that are somehow *right,* that are naturally part of our ideas about the things themselves. So nature is reestablished as a critical standard, and we are invited to wonder at the strangeness of the existing order.

This new standard is egalitarian, even though it obviously does not require an equal distribution of love and belief. The doctrine of right reasons suggests that we pay equal attention to the "different qualities," and to the "individuality" of every man and woman, that we find ways of sharing our resources that match the variety of their needs, interests, and capacities. The clues that we must follow lie in the conceptions we already have, in the things we already know about love and belief, and also about respect, obedience, education, medical care, legal aid, all the necessities of life—for this is no esoteric doctrine, whatever difficulties it involves. Nor is it a panacea for human misfortune, as Marx's last sentence makes clear: it is only meant to suggest a humane form of social accommodation. There is little we can do, in the best of societies, for the man who isn't loved. But there may be ways to avoid the triumph of the man who doesn't love—who buys love or forces it—or at least of his parallels in the larger social and political world: the leaders, for example, who are obeyed because of their coercive might or their enormous wealth. Our goal should be an end to tyranny, a society in which no man is master outside his sphere. That is the only society of equals worth having.

But it isn't readily had, for there is no necessity implied by the doctrine of right reasons. Pascal is wrong to say that "strength is powerless in the kingdom of the wise"—or rather, he is talking of an ideal realm and not of the intellectual world as we know it. In fact, wise men (at any rate, smart men) have often in the past defended the tyranny of the strong, as they still defend the tyranny of the rich. Sometimes, of course, they do this because they are persuaded of the necessity or the utility of tyrannical rule; sometimes for other reasons. Kristol suggests that whenever intellectuals are not persuaded, they are secretly aspiring to a tyranny of their own: they too would like to rule outside their sphere. Again, that's certainly true of some of them, and we all have our own lists. But it's not necessarily true. Surely it is possible, though no doubt difficult, for an intellectual to pay proper respect to the different companies of men. I want to argue that in our society the only way to do that, or to begin to do it, is to worry about the tyranny of money.

III

Let's start with some things that money cannot buy. It can't buy the American League pennant: star players can be hired, but victories presumably are not up for sale. It can't buy the National Book Award: writers can be subsidized, but the judges presumably can't be bribed. Nor, it should be added, can the pennant or the award be won by being strong, charming, or ideologically correct—at least we all hope not. In these sorts of cases, the right reasons for winning are built into the very structure of the competition. I am inclined to think that they are similarly built into a large number of social practices and institutions. It's worth focusing again, for example, on the practice of medicine. From ancient times, doctors were required to take an oath to help the sick, not the powerful or the wealthy: That requirement reflects a common understanding about the very nature of medical care. Many professionals don't share that understanding, but the opinion of ordinary men and women, in this case at least, is profoundly egalitarian.

The same understanding is reflected in

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our legal system. A man accused of a crime is entitled to a fair trial simply by virtue of being an accused man; nothing else about him is a relevant consideration. That is why defendants who cannot afford a lawyer are provided with legal counsel by the state: otherwise justice would be up for sale. And that is why defense counsel can challenge particular jurors thought to be prejudiced: the fate of the accused must hang on his guilt or innocence, not on his political opinions, his social class, or his race. We want different defendants to be treated differently, but only for the right reasons.

The case is the same in the political system, whenever the state is a democracy. Each citizen is entitled to one vote simply because he is a citizen. Men and women who are ambitious to exercise greater power must collect votes, but they can't do that by purchasing them; we don't want votes to be traded in the marketplace, though virtually everything else is traded there, and so we have made it a criminal offense to offer bribes to voters. The only right way to collect votes is to campaign for them, that is, to be persuasive, stimulating, encouraging, and so on. Great inequalities in political power are acceptable only if they result from a political process of a certain kind, open to argument, closed to bribery and coercion. The freely given support of one's fellow citizens is the appropriate criteria for exercising political power and, once again, it is not enough, or it shouldn't be, to be physically powerful, or well-born, or even ideologically correct.

It is often enough, however, to be rich. No one can doubt the mastery of the wealthy in the spheres of medicine, justice, and political power, even though these are not their own spheres. I don't want to say, their unchallenged mastery, for in democratic states we have at least made a start toward restricting the tyranny of money. But we have only made a start: think how different America would have to be before these three companies of men—the sick, the accused, the politically ambitious—could be treated in strict accordance with their individual qualities. It would be immediately necessary to have a national health service, national legal assistance, the strictest possible control over campaign contributions. Modest proposals, again, but they represent so many moves toward the realization of that old socialist slogan about the abolition of money. I have always been puzzled by that slogan, for socialists have never, to my knowledge, advocated a return to a barter economy. But it makes a great deal of sense if it is interpreted to mean *the abolition of the power of money outside its sphere*. What socialists want is a society in which wealth is no longer convertible into social goods with which it has no intrinsic connection.

But it is in the very nature of money to be convertible (that's all it is), and I find it hard to imagine the sorts of laws and law enforcement that would be necessary to prevent monied men and women from buying medical care and legal aid over and above whatever social minimum is provided for everyone. In the U.S. today, people can even buy police protection beyond what the state provides, though one would think that it is the primary purpose of the state to guarantee equal security to all its citizens, and it is by no means the rich, despite the temptations they offer, who stand in greatest need of protection. But this sort of thing could be prevented only by a very considerable restriction of individual liberty—of the freedom to offer services and to purchase them. The case is even harder with respect to politics itself. One can stop overt bribery, limit the size of campaign contributions, require publicity, and so on. But none of these things will be enough to prevent the wealthy from exercising power in all sorts of ways to which their fellow citizens have never consented. Indeed, the ability to hold or spend vast sums of money is itself a form of power, permitting what might be called preemptive strikes against the political system. And this, it seems to me, is the strongest possible argu-

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ment for a radical redistribution of wealth. So long as money is convertible outside its sphere, it must be widely and more or less equally held so as to minimize its distorting effects upon legitimate distributive processes.

VI

What is the proper sphere of wealth? What sorts of things are rightly had in exchange for money? The obvious answer is also the right one: all those economic goods and services, beyond what is necessary to life itself, which men find useful or pleasing. There is nothing degraded about wanting these things; there is nothing unattractive, boring, debased, or philistine about a society organized to provide them for its members. Kristol insists that a snobbish dislike for the sheer productivity of bourgeois society is a feature of egalitarian argument. I would have thought that a deep appreciation of that productivity has more often marked the work of socialist writers. The question is, how are the products to be distributed? Now, the right way to possess useful and pleasing things is by making them, or growing them, or somehow providing them for others. The medium of exchange is money, and this is the proper function of money and, ideally, its only function.

There should be no way of acquiring rare books and sailboats except by working for them. But this is not to say that men deserve whatever money they can get for the goods and services they provide. In capitalist society, the actual exchange value of the work they do is largely a function of market conditions over which they exercise no control. It has little to do with the intrinsic value of the work or with the individual qualities of the worker. There is no reason for socialists to respect it, unless it turns out to be socially useful to do so. There are other values, however, which they must respect, for money isn't the only or necessarily the most important thing for which work can be exchanged. A lawyer is surely entitled to the respect he wins from his colleagues and to the gratitude and praise he wins from his clients. The work he has done may also constitute a good reason for making him director of the local legal aid society; it may even be a good reason for making him a judge. It isn't, on the face of it, a good reason for allowing him an enormous income. Nor is the willingness of his clients to pay his fees a sufficient reason, for most of them almost certainly think they should be paying less. The money they pay is different from the praise they give, in that the first is extrinsically determined, the second freely offered.

In a long and thoughtful discussion of egalitarianism in the *Public Interest,* Daniel Bell worries that socialists today are aiming at an "equality of results" instead of the "just meritocracy" (the career open to talents) that he believes was once the goal of leftist and even of revolutionary politics.[5] I confess that I am tempted by "equality of results" in the sphere of money, precisely because it is so hard to see how a man can merit the things that money can buy. On the other hand, it is easy to list cases where merit (of one sort or another) is clearly the right distributive criteria, and where socialism would not require the introduction of any other principle.

- Six people speak at a meeting, advocating different policies, seeking to influence the decision of the assembled group.
- Six doctors are known to aspire to a hospital directorship.
- Six writers publish novels and anxiously await the reviews of the critics.
- Six men seek the company and love of the same woman.

Now, we all know the right reasons for the sorts of decisions, choices, judgments that are in question here. I have never heard anyone seriously argue that the woman must let herself be shared, or the hospital establish

[5] "On Meritocracy and Equality," *Public Interest,* Fall 1972.

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a six-man directorate, or the critics distribute their praise evenly, or the people at the meeting adopt all six proposals. In all these cases, the personal qualities of the individuals involved (as these appear to the others) should carry the day.

But what sorts of personal qualities are relevant to owning a $20,000 sailboat? A love for sailing, perhaps, and a willingness to build the boat or to do an equivalent amount of work. In America today, it would take a steelworker about two years to earn that money (assuming that he didn't buy anything else during all that time) and it would take a corporation executive a month or two. How can that be right, when the executive also has a rug on the floor, air-conditioning, a deferential secretary, and enormous personal power? He's being paid as he goes, while the steelworker is piling up a kind of moral merit (so we have always been taught) by deferring pleasure. Surely there is no meritocratic defense for this sort of difference. It would seem much better to pay the worker and the executive more or less the same weekly wage and let the sailboat be bought by the man who is willing to forgo other goods and services, that is, by the man who really wants it. Is this "equality of result"? In fact, the results will be different, if the men are, and it seems to me that they will be different for the right reasons.

Against this view, there is a conventional but also very strong argument that can be made on behalf of enterprise and inventiveness. If there is a popular defense of inequality, it is this one, but I don't think it can carry us very far toward the inequalities that Kristol wants to defend. Consider the case of the man who builds a better mousetrap, or opens a restaurant and sells delicious blintzes, or does a little teaching on the side. He has no air-conditioning, no secretary, no power; probably his reward has to be monetary. He has to have a chance, at least, to earn a little more money than his less enterprising neighbors. The market doesn't guarantee that he will in fact earn more, but it does make it possible, and until some other way can be found to do that, market relations are probably defensible under the doctrine of right reasons. Here in the world of the petty-bourgeoisie, it seems appropriate that people able to provide goods or services that are novel, timely, or particularly excellent should reap the rewards they presumably had in mind when they went to work. And which they were right to have in mind: no one would want to feed blintzes to strangers, day after day, merely to win their gratitude.

But one might well want to be a corporation executive, day after day, merely to make all those decisions. It is precisely the people who are paid or who pay themselves vast sums of money who reap all sorts of other rewards too. We need to sort out these different forms of payment. First of all, there are rewards, like the pleasure of exercising power, which are intrinsic to certain jobs. An executive must make decisions—that's what he is there for—and even decisions seriously affecting other people. It is right that he should do that, however, only if he has been persuasive, stimulating, encouraging, and so on, and won the support of a majority of those same people. That he owns the corporation or has been chosen by the owners isn't enough. Indeed, given the nature of corporate power in contemporary society, the following statement (to paraphrase Pascal) is false and tyrannical: because I am rich, so I should make decisions and command obedience. Even in corporations organized democratically, of course, the personal exercise of power will persist. It is more likely to be seen, however, as it is normally seen in political life—as the chief attraction of executive positions. And this will cast a new light on the other rewards of leadership.

The second of these consists in all the side-effects of power: prestige, status, deference, and so on. Democracy tends to reduce these, or should tend that way when it is working well, without significantly reducing the attractions of decision-making. The

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same is true of the third form of reward, money itself, which is owed to work, but not necessarily to place and power. We pay political leaders much less than corporation executives, precisely because we understand so well the excitement and appeal of political office. Insofar as we recognize the political character of corporations, then, we can pay their executives less too. I doubt that there would be a lack of candidates even if we paid them no more than was paid to any other corporation employee. Perhaps there are reasons for paying them more—but not meritocratic reasons, for we give all the attention that is due to their merit when we make them our leaders.

We don't give all due attention to the restaurant owner, however, merely by eating his blintzes. Him we have to pay, and he can ask, I suppose, whatever the market will bear. That's fair enough, and no real threat to equality so long as he can't amass so much money that he becomes a threat to the integrity of the political system and so long as he does not exercise power, tyrannically, over other men and women. Within his proper sphere, he is as good a citizen as any other. His activities recall Dr. Johnson's remark: "There are few ways in which man can be more innocently employed than in getting money."

V

The most immediate occasion of the conservative attack on equality is the reappearance of the quota system—newly designed, or so it is said, to move us closer to egalitarianism rather than to maintain old patterns of religious and racial discrimination. Kristol does not discuss quotas, perhaps because they are not widely supported by professional people (or by professors): the disputes of the last several years do not fit the brazen simplicity of his argument. But almost everyone else talks about them, and Bell worries at some length, and rightly, about the challenge quotas represent to the "just meritocracy" he favors. Indeed, quotas in any form, new or old, establish "wrong reasons" as the basis of important social decisions, perhaps the most important social decisions: who shall be a doctor, who shall be a lawyer, and who shall be a bureaucrat. It is obvious that being black or a woman or having a Spanish surname (any more than being white, male, and Protestant) is no qualification for entering a university or a medical school or joining the civil service. In a sense, then, the critique of quotas consists almost entirely of a series of restatements and reiterations of the argument I have been urging in this essay. One only wishes that the critics would apply it more generally than they seem ready to do. There is more to be said, however, if they consistently refuse to do that.

The positions for which quotas are being urged are, in America today, key entry points to the good life. They open the way, that is, to a life marked above all by a profusion of goods, material and moral: possessions, conveniences, prestige, and deference. Many of these goods are not in any plausible sense appropriate rewards for the work that is being done. They are merely the rewards that upper classes throughout history have been able to seize and hold for their members. Quotas, as they are currently being used, are a way of redistributing these rewards by redistributing the social places to which they conventionally pertain. It is a bad way, because one really wants doctors and (even) civil servants to have certain sorts of qualifications. To the people on the receiving end of medical and bureaucratic services, race and class are a great deal less important than knowledge, competence, courtesy, and so on. I don't want to say that race and class are entirely unimportant: it would be wrong to underestimate the distortions introduced by an inegalitarian society into these sorts of human relations. But if the right reason for receiving medical care is being sick, then the right reason for giving medical care is being able to help the sick. And so medical schools should pay atten-

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tion, first of all and almost exclusively, to the potential helpfulness of their applicants.

But they may be able to do that only if the usual connections between place and reward are decisively broken. Here is another example of the doctrine of right reasons. If men and women wanted to be doctors primarily because they wanted to be helpful, they would have no reason to object when judgments were made about their potential helpfulness. But so long as there are extrinsic reasons for wanting to be a doctor, there will be pressure to choose doctors (that is, to make medical school places available) for reasons that are similarly extrinsic. So long as the goods that medical schools distribute include more than certificates of competence, include, to be precise, certificates of earning power, quotas are not entirely implausible. I don't see that being black is a worse reason for owning a sailboat than being a doctor. They are equally bad reasons.

Quotas today are a means of lower-class aggrandizement, and they are likely to be resolutely opposed, opposed without guilt and worry, only by people who are entirely content with the class structure as it is and with the present distribution of goods and services. For those of us who are not content, anxiety can't be avoided. We know that quotas are wrong, but we also know that the present distribution of wealth makes no moral sense, that the dominance of the income curve plays havoc with legitimate distributive principles, and that quotas are a form of redress no more irrational than the world within which and because of which they are demanded. In an egalitarian society, however, quotas would be unnecessary and inexcusable.

VI

I have put forward a difficult argument in very brief form, in order to answer Kristol's even briefer argument—for he is chiefly concerned with the motives of those who advocate equality and not with the case they make or try to make. He is also concerned, he says, with the fact that equality has suddenly been discovered and is now for the first time being advocated as the *chief* virtue of social institutions: as if societies were not complex and values ambiguous. I don't know what discoverers and advocates he has in mind.[6] But it is worth stressing that equality as I have described it does not stand alone, but is closely related to the idea of liberty. The relation is complex, and I cannot say very much about it here. It is a feature of the argument I have made, however, that the right reason for distributing love, belief, and, most important for my immediate purposes, political power is the freely given consent of lovers, believers, and citizens. In these sorts of cases, of course, we all have standards to urge upon our fellows: we say that so and so should not be believed unless he offers evidence or that so and so should not be elected to political office unless he commits himself to civil rights. But clearly credence and power are not and ought not to be distributed according to my standards or yours. What is necessary is that everyone else be able to say yes or no. Without liberty, then, there could be no rightful distribution at all. On the other hand, men are not free, not politically free at least, if *his* yes, because of his birth or place or fortune, counts seventeen times more heavily than *my* no. Here the case is exactly as socialists have always claimed it to be: liberty and equality are the two chief virtues of social institutions, and they stand best when they stand together. □

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[6] The only writer he mentions is John Rawls, whose *Theory of Justice* Kristol seems entirely to misunderstand. For Rawls explicitly accords priority to the "liberty principle" over those other maxims that point toward greater equality.

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Herbert J. Gans

Some Problems of Equality

A completely egalitarian society strikes me as so utopian as to be beyond policy-oriented discussion. If all incomes were equal, it is doubtful that the most unpleasant and taxing jobs would be filled, and if all power were equalized, it is doubtful that any decisions could be made and any public activities could proceed. Moreover, such a society would need to be heavily regimented to prevent new inequalities from arising, and it would have to be static, straining toward a totally egalitarian end-state above all else. The major defect of complete equality is the defect of all single-value conceptions: if equality is the all-encompassing goal, then all other goals, regardless of their desirability or necessity, become lower in priority, and no society can function by pursuing one goal above all others. Some of the critics of equality have made this point, hoping thereby to end any discussion of equality, but complete equality is a spurious issue. The real issue, at least from the point of view of pragmatic social policy, is more equality, that is, how much present levels of inequality of income and power should be reduced. Putting it this way does not detract from the importance of equality as a goal, but it makes it possible to ask how much equality is feasible, and at what costs for the achievement of other goals. What degree of income equality is compatible with the division of labor, with filling unpleasant jobs, and with economic efficiency generally? What degree of political equality can be achieved in a large heterogeneous society that must inevitably be run by bureaucracies, and by political leaders who must represent—and thus in some ways be more unequal than—the citizens in whose names they act?

These are fundamental questions for egalitarian thought, and I can answer them only in very general terms. No person should have less income than is necessary to pay for the minimal goods and services considered essential for the American standard of living—for the standard package, as Lee Rainwater puts it—or than is necessary for him or her to be a fully participating member of American society. No one has yet computed the size of this minimum, although a long series of Gallup polls asking respondents how much they need to get along in their present community have shown that this minimum is about 70 percent of the median income, except that the poor, whose wants are more modest, have generally said they could get by with an income equivalent to 60 percent of that median. Consequently, more equality means, at least for me, that no person should have an income of less than 60 to 70 percent of the society's median, however income is defined; or rather, of the median income for a particular position in the life-cycle, and in the case of families, of the median income by family size.

Conversely, the income ceiling ought to be determined on two other grounds. One

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is John Rawls's well-argued principle that above-the-median inequality is desirable only when it helps to reduce below-the-median inequality. The other ground is pragmatic economic efficiency: What is the lowest maximum at which people continue to be willing to do unpleasant or highly responsible work or take needed investment and other risks? Both criteria can only be evaluated by economic analysis, and it may turn out that there ought to be no ceiling; that given the small number of multimillionaires in American society, more would be lost by reducing people's ability to strive for the maximum than by expropriating most of the income of a few millionaires—although this does not negate the desirability and urgency of requiring the rich to pay higher taxes than anyone else. A 100 percent tax on income beyond a certain point may be undesirable, but that does not rule out a 75 to 80 percent tax. And similar questions must be raised about minimum and maximum amounts of wealth: What should be done with the undistributed profit and other wealth of the large corporations, and with the old fortunes that still play such a central role in the American economy? How much wealth may be passed on to the next generation through inheritance?

With respect to political power, the achievement of more equality through the setting of floors and ceilings is impossible, since power is neither quantifiable nor an individual attribute; it usually attaches to groups and roles. I suppose one can establish some general thresholds and ceilings; no person should be so powerless that he or she has no control whatsoever over his or her own life, and no person should be so powerful that he or she can force others to do his or her bidding without taking these others into account. It is possible to establish total electoral equality, giving every person one vote and requiring that person to vote or cast a blank ballot, but this is only one kind of political equality and not the most important kind by any means. If campaign expenditures were nationalized, as I suggested elsewhere, then the power to influence political candidates would be removed from the rich, but it would not necessarily be equalized; it might reside in those politicians and bureaucrats who oversee the expenditure of campaign funds. In addition, a corporate manager who can decide how many people will be hired or fired and where a plant will be located will always have more influence with a president, congressman, or mayor than one of his employees. This may not even be undesirable, as long as the manager is elected by or is otherwise responsive to his or her constituents, but these should include not only the company's stockholders but also its employees, who must have some degree of worker control, its customers, and the general public insofar as it is affected by company decisions. A manager's influence must be an outcome of group decisions.

Because power is primarily a group attribute, more political equality in fact requires the internal democratization of all groups, so that their members can have a greater say about the actions of their leaders. This means, in practice, that all groups exerting some power ought to be led by elected leaders, chosen by their members and by those nonmembers whose lives are affected by that group, including not only corporations but also governmental agencies and voluntary associations. But more political equality also requires some equalization of power between groups, so that consumers do not always lose out to producers, or the poor to the rich. All this probably means that the federal government must become more powerful than all other groups if only to be able to implement greater equality among them. While this is undeniably a disadvantage of a more egalitarian society, it seems unavoidable, and the net benefits in greater equality for the large number will outweigh the costs of a more centralized government, provided of course that this government is restricted in its own efforts to amass more power by

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a pervasive system of checks and balances and by frequent elections.

The Subjects of Equality

THE SUBJECTS of equality, the people or groups for whom more equality is desirable, are, in the most general sense, those who are now unequal, which I would interpret to mean unequal with respect to income and power. This should not be a matter of great debate, but opponents of "affirmative action" and quotas have recently argued, and with considerable passion, that in America resources should be allocated to people on their individual merits and not on the basis of their membership in some group, particularly one that is defined by ascription rather than achievement. Consequently, they argue, it is wrong to suggest that X percent of jobs in a firm or university ought to be reserved for blacks or Y percent for women, particularly if this means that people who are not qualified will be hired. Aside from the fact that in all firms or universities, unqualified people are sometimes hired because they have political influence or are in the right place at the right time, the distinction between ascribed and achieved characteristics strikes me as irrelevant. To be sure, women differ from men with respect to their role in procreation, but equality of income and power, and occupational qualifications, have nothing to do with procreation, and the major ascribed characteristic of women is therefore irrelevant, as is skin color in the case of blacks and other racial minorities.

Needless to say, unqualified people should not be hired, but qualification must be measured by performance and not by credentials. Most advocates of meritocracy fail to make this distinction, and in fact do not even consider that merit can be defined in different ways. For example, defenders of meritocracy in the university argue that university standards would be lowered by hiring unqualified colleagues, but qualification is almost always defined by credentials, by having a Ph.D. or the right kind of Ph.D., and not by classroom performance. The university—or rather, the graduate school—illustrates the limited relevance of credentials, for although it trains its graduate students to become researchers, most Ph.D.s, whatever their field, do little research after graduation and perform almost entirely as teachers. Therefore, if merit is to be defined in terms of performance, the relevant qualifications are those of teaching performance in the classroom, not the possession of a researcher's credentials, for no one has yet proved that Ph.D.s are better teachers than M.A.s. To be sure, some teachers should be hired for their research performance so that research will be conducted, and some teaching is better done by researchers, particularly that involving training and practice in research. But until the defenders of meritocracy broaden their definition of merit and judge it in terms of performance, they are only defending the right to have *their* credentials serve as the prime indicator of qualification.

Some people will be deficient even on the basis of performance, although such a judgment should not be made until on-the-job training is provided for them. This training should be possible for almost any job, even in a university, and in many cases, it need take only a fraction of the time now required by prejob education. People who fail to perform adequately after such training ought not be allowed to stay in a meritocratic institution such as the university, but until merit is measured by performance, a university cannot even claim to be meritocratic.

Equality between occupations is probably impossible in a society based on a complicated division of labor, but more equality is desirable both between and within occupations, for over 90 percent of the jobs paying $15,000 or more a year are held by white males. Altering this statistic may take some time, and it must proceed more quickly in those occupations where total employment is rising, but even though more equality of results must be accompanied by equality of

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performance, this cannot be achieved by limiting women and blacks to inferior jobs. Moreover, when race and sex have been used for over a century as criteria for not hiring people, it is hypocritical to argue that they should not be used as criteria for hiring because this would be "reverse discrimination." In terms of equality of results, this simply means the continuation of the traditional discrimination, albeit for a different reason.

To be sure, if faculty with poorer credentials are hired or students with a poorer educational background are admitted to a university, "standards" will decline. The new faculty may teach at lower levels of abstraction, and the new students may sometimes be unable to comprehend what the incumbent faculty is teaching; and insofar as the newcomers can affect the teaching program or the intellectual climate, the levels of both will be lowered, at least from the perspective of the incumbents. But for the newcomers, who will have a chance to teach and learn at higher intellectual levels than before, the standards will be raised, and the real issue is whose perspectives are to be favored.

This issue is not limited to the university or to meritocracies generally; it comes up in changing neighborhoods and is generic to implementing more equality, for it requires a comparison of the benefits (for the newcomers) and the costs (for the incumbents) of egalitarian policies. In theory, a society could decide that the benefits are worth the costs and that incumbents will have to learn to adjust to what is for them a decline in standards and also in status. In practice, however, the decision is arrived at politically, sometimes favoring the newcomers, as in most changing neighborhoods, where they pay inflated prices for their rise in status; sometimes favoring the incumbents, as seems to be the case at least in private high-status universities. Sometimes, compromise solutions are possible, such as providing remedial training to the newcomers or segregating them so that the incumbents can operate at their accustomed level; but when such compromises are not possible, the group with greater political influence tends to win out. In theory, egalitarian policy would have to side with the newcomers, unless the incumbents can prove their argument that their contribution to society is so important that the rights of newcomers must be abridged; but while that argument is politically persuasive, it is difficult to prove. And if the institution is publicly supported, it is particularly dubious for incumbents to suggest that prior occupancy justifies permanent control over standards.

Equality and Equity

FINALLY, one must distinguish between the goals of equality and those of equity. Equality has to do with sameness of results, while equity, or fairness, concerns the relationship between one person's work or other effort and the reward for that effort, and another person's effort and reward. Thus, inequity occurs when one person works harder than another but gets less reward, and equity would presumably equalize rewards on the basis of similar effort. As such it differs from equality of results, which ignores the concept of effort and assumes that everyone is entitled to equal rewards regardless of effort, or rather, that everyone will exert equal effort because of equal results. Such an assumption is not realistic, however, for if equality of results were guaranteed, some people might work less hard.

This consideration alone makes equity an important concept. Also, many Americans are probably more concerned with equity than with equality; they want society to be fair, not equal. The continued sanctity of the work ethic suggests that they are reluctant to provide equality of results to those people who, for one reason or another, do not exert productive effort by working, even if their unemployment is not their own fault. Thus, greater equity could produce more inequality, for people who do not work would get less, although if equity were measured also

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by the effort taken to find work, then equality of results would also be an equitable solution.

The major problem with the concept of equity therefore centers around the idea and measurement of effort. If effort is defined in terms of the outcome of exerted effort, equity would have more income going to those who are more productive or more important to the economy or to society. The problem is how to define "productive" and "important"; surely the loan shark plays a productive role in the economy, but his rewards are not determined by equity. Importance is even harder to ascertain because it requires answering the question, Important for what? While the theoretical physicist may be important in pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge, the garbage man is more important in guaranteeing everyone's good health, including that of the physicist. Equity judgments thus require agreement about the major values of the society; in a society that was not able or willing to stress scientific innovation, presumably the garbage man would get a higher salary. Of course, equity can also be defined in terms of the amounts of training required for a particular effort, as it tends to be in America, so that by this criterion the physicist would earn more than the garbage man; but there would be little equity to this arrangement if the physicist had been supported by government stipends all through his or her training period and did not make sacrifices to achieve that training for which equity demanded that he or she be recompensed later. In real life, physicists earn more than garbage men because their work is considered more important by those who make public decisions, and because physicists have, until recently, been a scarce resource whereas the potential supply of garbage men far outweighs the demand; but these criteria have little to do with equity.

If equity is defined in terms of the willingness to exert effort, however—as it ought to be—then incomes should be based on that exertion, and the shirker, whether physicist or garbage man, should earn less. The problem here is the measurement of exertion. Effort so defined is difficult to measure, for it is ultimately a personal attribute, and operational indicators of effort, physical or mental, are hard to find and to compare. Moreover, some kinds of work require more effort than others, so that equity would mean inequality for people whose jobs required less effort. Thus, the physicist with a light teaching load who did no research might earn considerably less than the garbage man, although this would by no means be unreasonable since the former was obviously shirking. Also, equity is a subjective concept, because what people deem to be fair depends on their own evaluation of their effort as compared with that of others, and few people would downgrade their own exertions. It is perhaps possible to develop operational indicators of exertion to be used for public policy, such as number of hours worked, and equity would then demand, as it does now, that people who work longer hours receive more pay.

Here, equity and equality would coincide, for while everyone would earn the same income in a completely egalitarian society, equity could be provided by reducing the number of hours worked, particularly in

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jobs requiring great exertion. However, an egalitarian society—unlike an equitable one—must find methods of controlling shirking. In theory, shirkers could be punished with job loss or income reduction, as they are in an equitable society, but in practice this would award a great deal of power to those people who decided who was shirking, with obvious dangers of regimentation and the possibility that people who did not get along with the decision-maker would be punished as shirkers. In this respect, equity is more desirable than equality.

Another problem of equity is that it requires many more judgments about what is equitable, whereas equality of results is more easily administered. Of course, from another perspective, this problem is a virtue; equity takes individual conditions into consideration more than equality. Much depends here on how equality is defined and what a society deems to be equal. For example, equity would demand that a family with three children receive more income than a childless couple, but while a completely egalitarian society might make the same decision, it could also argue that if people have equal incomes, they can then decide to spend it on children or on whatever childless couples spend their income on instead. This, however, assumes that the society is not interested in encouraging fertility.

Equality and equity both have virtues and vices, but equality is deficient without equity, and equity is deficient without equality. Equity requires some degree of equality, for inequality is unfair. Conversely, more equality would itself bring about greater equity, and once major inequalities were removed, individual cases that might require some new inequalities in the name of equity could then be dealt with more easily. □

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Michael Young

Is Equality a Dream?

The article below was first delivered as the Rita Hinden Memorial Lecture on November 18, 1972, at Bedford College, London, to honor the memory of a leading English socialist. Its author, who for a time was secretary of the Labour party's Research Department, is best known for his influential book, The Rise of the Meritocracy.—ED.

I am in the course of this lecture going to refer to a few of the socialists I most admire—Morris, Tawney, Titmuss, Rita Hinden herself. I will start with William Morris. "On this then I take my stand as a socialist," he said, "that there cannot be equality and justice in a society, if private property is allowed in it." He and many others who came before and after him believed that private property is an institution for organized robbery of the poor by the rich, a system of oppression no less oppressive when its strength is derived from superior wealth than when it relies on a preponderance of physical force. The one is the other: the wealthy can hold on to their property because they can and do summon the physical force of the state to their aid.

The case for equality, as it is presented, nowadays is usually a little more muted than that. But is his way of looking at society any less valid than when Morris uttered those words nearly a hundred years ago at a meeting of the Socialist League a mile from here? Naturally, it all depends on how one looks at people, particularly whom one compares them with, and the conclusions one draws from doing so. Consider these examples. Some time ago I spent several nights in hostels for the homeless in London. One of them was a Salvation Army hostel in Great Peter Street, Westminster. The dormitory in which I tried to sleep was filled with men, mostly elderly, tossing and turning, crying out in their dreams for mothers or dead wives, their worldly wealth being boots and a bundle of clothes beside the bed or under their pillow. At one moment a very large black man coming back swearing from the lavatory was silhouetted in the doorway, completely naked, almost as if *he* for one did not even have any clothes at all. The hostel building could have had the same Dickensian appearance when Morris gave his talk as it does now. Through its windows, so near that it seemed almost as if one could lean out and touch it, could be seen the tower of Big Ben, standing with the light on at the top showing that the House was in session. There in that other building were other men, none of them in cloth caps like Keir Hardie wore when he was first elected MP (or, I noticed, the deputy foreign minister of China who has just visited London), and most of those other men had ten times, a hundred times, some a thousand or ten thousand times more property than the old man lying near me. If one regards him as having the same and therefore as well justified a claim upon society as the secretary of state for social services or any other MP, then, given the shortage of resources, it fol-

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lows that the secretary of state just by having so much more than the median amount of property and income, and quite irrespective of his policies for the social services, is robbing the man in the next bed. And so am I. So are most of us in this hall.

Another example. More recently I visited a village in Mauritius called Carol, standing next to a great sugar estate owned by Lonrho, the British company that has made money in so many developing countries. Out of 500 inhabitants it was said that only one had a full-time job. They were mostly living in tiny ramshackle huts—some of them, for single old people, not much bigger than a cupboard and not watertight either, in a tropical country where the rain falls in torrents; few had luxuries like beds or blankets for the cold nights, or plates or spoons for their meals when they had anything to eat. The shareholders of Lonrho, living in Didsbury or Hampstead and letting the dividend warrants slip so smoothly and comfortingly into their bank accounts, are they not responsible for these, their fellowmen in Carol? Every one of them I would guess is many times richer than the lady in the cupboard, and some are millions of times more so. They are robbing her. And so am I, and so are you.

The examples are all around. The man in the Austin Maxi drives past a queue of mothers and children and of sad old people waiting their turn to get out of the cold and into a dirty, crowded poor-law style of a doctor's consulting room. He may not notice them as he impassively thinks of his next appointment. But lavishing his wealth on his car and himself, he is depriving them of the better conditions that money could buy for them, if there were more of it for the Health Service and other forms of public expenditure. By getting so much for himself out of the limited common pool, the man in the Maxi is equally robbing the immigrants who are trying to build a family in one room with a stove on the landing, the children in the slum school in Manchester, the widow behind the faded curtains, and, above all, because they are the poorest of all, the people in the Third World who, if they have no votes for the House under Big Ben, still are a charge on our conscience. Privilege for some is as surely poverty for others as it ever was.

The basic argument is therefore very simple. It is, as I say, a question of whom you compare with whom, and how. If, when looking at the man in the doctor's-office queue, you compare him with the car-driver and say, yes, they are different but not in one overriding respect, that they are both persons who should have the same equal rights in the economic as they do in the political sphere. If you believe that the most important thing about people is their membership in the human race, their common humanity as Rita Hinden kept saying throughout her life, then whether or not you have this belief because you are under the influence, acknowledged or unacknowledged, of the religion whose central tenet is that God became man, you must also believe in at any rate some form of equality. As she put it, when writing with Allan Flanders in 1956:

> It is not the differences which nature has ordained or fate decreed, against which socialists have protested; that would be nonsense. Their revolt has been against the privileges which society concedes to some and not to others. Why, they have asked, should some enjoy a favored treatment simply because they happen to belong to a particular class or race or sex or social group? Every person, no matter what his origins or endowments, wants to make the most of his life in his own way. His claim to do so, without causing injury to others, deserves the same respect as the next man's. This is the sense in which all men are equal and Jack is as good as his master. It is an equality that rests, simply and surely, on their common humanity.[1]

[1] *Twentieth Century Socialism* (London: Penguin, 1956), p. 24.

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And Tawney's conclusion from this sort of argument is to be equally recommended to the naked black man and Sir Keith Joseph. It is that there can be no justification for "A small class which wears several men's clothes, eats several men's dinners, occupies several families' houses, and lives several men's lives." [2] There may not be a crime behind every fortune but every fortune is a crime when things are seen in this light.

If they are, then one can make some concessions to inequality, but not many. If there were distribution to each according to his needs (and it is difficult to argue against that) some would get more than others. The invalid or the mental patient needs more than the healthy, the man with many children more than the bachelor. Equality of respect means difference in treatment. If distribution were according to effort, which has at least something to commend it, the man who worked, say, longer hours than another would also get more by way of reward.

But if either of these were the yardstick there would not be anything like the degree of inequality there is. The inequality results from honoring what is supposed in this sphere to be the great principle of modern society, distribution according to capacity—capacity, that is, to contribute to the collective economic effort. If one is against inequality one must also deny the legitimacy of this principle, and when I joined in this endless debate with the book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy,* I was trying to follow Tawney in denying not only the right of a son to step into a dead man's shoes and to inherit power and wealth from his father but also the right of a son or daughter to acquire riches just because of their supposed merit, since their merit stems so largely from the accident of being born into a particular social position with a particular genetic endowment. We do not worship ancestors but we still in a roundabout way worship ancestry. By the manner in which capital and income are distributed we ensure that he that is lucky shall have added unto him still further luck.

A society which enshrines that rule is no more just than a Casino. The merit of the gamblers, if they have any, is not their own but that of their parents and grandparents, and so on, back into time immemorial. If one believes that, as I do, then the central pillar of the unequal society is knocked down, its legitimacy removed. This is what Rawls has recently argued in his book on justice.[3] I imagine I would have made more of the point in the *Meritocracy* book if the research studies had then been published which have since shown how much more important is the influence on academic achievement of the home than that of the school.

But Tawney recognized, as we all must, that lecture and prod as we may, this is not of course how the rich view the matter, nor even a lot of others who would not call themselves rich, nor even most of us socialists when we leave behind our harsh Sunday talk for the upholstered armchairs and gins and tonic of weekdays. He spoke, ironically, about the need to "cultivate the new stoicism of affluence" and might have remarked on the need to do the same with the hypocrisies of affluence. You will see from this, and from the general tenor of my argument, that I do not think people who accept, in the sense I have been trying to get across, that property is robbery should hold on to their property, or to the incomes they derive from it. Tolstoy thought at one time that he could not get rid of his property without demeaning those to whom it was given, because it would always be to them a sort of charity. That may apply to individual charity but not to gifts made to War on Want or Shelter or other collective charities, or even to gifts to the Exchequer. Though it would no doubt be better for a socialist state to arrange on a general basis for a more equitable sharing

[2] *The Acquisitive Society* (London: Bell, 1948 edition), p. 41. First published 1921.

[3] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

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it is possible to do something, even individually, in the meantime. Why then do we not do more? How is it that to socialists the reasoning seems irrefutable in theory and yet is constantly refuted in practice, even by ourselves?

For we are nearly all divided, by "all" meaning socialists and nonsocialists alike. On the one hand we all of us accept that the rest of humanity, or at any rate that elect part of it which is native to this island, and especially to London and the Southeast, is made up of people like ourselves. This new orthodoxy has gained a victory over the older view that God could not have been so blind as to lodge a real soul in a woman or a humble man, let alone a black; that some people were as serfs, slaves, or women so low in the scale, not much above animals, that they could properly be owned, or if not owned, despised by all self-respecting males. This reversal of values is perhaps the greatest gain for the lucky part of mankind whom the lottery of birth has slotted into countries which have combined industrialization with democracy. On the other hand we nearly all, in some part of our minds, also take almost as axiomatic (despite the counteraxiom I have paraded a few minutes ago) the other principle I mentioned, that, however, originating, greater efficiency, capacity, competence, responsibility, performance, achievement, in short a greater contribution to the sum of goods and services—put it how you will, it amounts to the same thing—deserves a greater reward.

To Our Contributors

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To my mind Tawney's greatest virtue was, if I have interpreted him correctly, that he saw this was almost bound to be so, and that the tension between equality and inequality would therefore continue to exist, as long as people prized material production, and so the most productive people, as much as they have done and do. In some relatively simple mainly agricultural societies there might be an approach closer to some equality of condition, which is one reason why China, Cuba, and Tanzania have a certain contemporary glamour for some socialist minorities in the West; but with industrialization, acquisitiveness itself has been fed by the increased supply of consumer goods, and if economic goals ride so high then clearly the people who contribute more to the supply as judged by the mechanism of the market are more "valuable." This to some extent justifies their greater power, status, income, wealth, in their own eyes and even in the eyes of others, *some* others at least. If that was true of the time when Tawney wrote both *Equality* and *The Acquisitive Society,* how much more is it true today.

The inequality would not of course be stable if those with more responsible jobs kept the whole growth in supply to themselves. That would be a recipe for a permanent revolutionary situation even if its actual outbreak was suppressed by terror. As it is and has been, there has, with economic growth, been some fairly steady filtering down of some of the benefits of industrialization to the mass of people in the middle through the occupational system. At the bottom, in the underclass, there has not apparently been much improvement in its relative position since the war, but there certainly has as the result of the welfare state, since Morris gave his lecture. In our book [*Family and Kinship In East London,* Penguin, 1957], Peter Willmott and I have tried to develop this theme. The grim image of society we are proposing is that of a marching column. The last rank keeps its distance from

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the first, and the distance between them does not seem to have lessened much for a long time. But as the column advances, the last rank does eventually reach and pass the point that the first rank had passed some time before. There is a kind of egalitarian tendency but it works only with a time lag. The people in the rear cannot, without breaking rank and rushing ahead, reach where the van is but, since the whole column is moving forward, they can hope to reach where the van was. Lagged equality—always partial, never including everybody—is the nearest approach there has yet been to equality. But the process is not without consolation. If people can reasonably hope that the future will bring some absolute improvement for themselves and their children the inequality is a good deal more bearable, or was until rampant inflation replaced expectation with fear and uncertainty. The benefits, if they be benefits, of industrialization have been to some extent spread. The people in the middle therefore have some interest in the people at the top—managers, civil servants, doctors, other professions—being competent rather than incompetent, and if more money for them means that they even *might* be more competent than otherwise perhaps the price is worth paying.

Tawney deplored the tendency of working-class people to be too easily satisfied. Their characteristic fault, he thought, was that they are

> too ready to forget fundamental issues and to allow themselves to be bought off with an advance in wages, too willing to accept the moral premises of their masters, even when they dispute the economic conclusions which their masters draw for them, too distrustful of themselves and too much disposed to believe that the minority which has exercised authority in the past possesses a mana, a mysterious wisdom.[4]

He saw no sure way of altering this as long as the overarching values of society remained the same, as long, that is, as the single-minded concentration on the pursuit of riches persisted. There would be more economic equality only when people relaxed a little about economic growth and showed their "faith in the possibility of a society in which a higher value will be set on human beings, and a lower value on money and economic power," [5] their faith in spiritual as against material values, their concern not just with economic achievement but with all the other standards by which people can judge themselves and be judged, all the other goals besides economic advancement.

In other words the kernel of the argument, or at any rate one of them, is that there should be much more of a pluralistic value system and much less of a monolithic one. If the craftsman who produces a first-rate article were valued as highly as he was in the utopia described by Morris in *News from Nowhere;* if the artist or anyone who tries to add to beauty in buildings or music or gardens were really appreciated well beyond a few coteries; if the parents who managed to rear reasonably happy children were thought of as having done something of much more importance than any managing director or advertising agent; if all the other qualities which have little or nothing to do with economics—human warmth and the capacity for fellowship, sensitivity to the environment of which man is part, generosity to others, and above all the sense of being alive and open to the world around—if such qualities were valued as highly as, or more highly than, the kind of achievement which enters into the class structure; then such a structure could hardly survive. For a class structure which embodies a hierarchy is only viable when there is a consensus imposed by society and accepted by a majority about what values matter most. Destroy the dominant consensus by enlarging the penumbra of criteria by which people are ranked, and

[4] *Equality* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964 edition), p. 41. First published 1931.

[5] *Equality,* p. 46.

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many different hierarchies, or no hierarchies at all, will be substituted for the single hierarchy that rules an acquisitive society.

If this happened, the more pluralistic value system and greater equality would support each other mutually and cumulatively. Each extension of pluralism would make it easier to advance equality in the distribution of power, wealth, and status. The resistance to egalitarianism would be reduced simply because people would not care so much about their possessions and the kind of achievement by themselves and others which added to possessions. And then the more equality there was in worldly wealth, the less it would be worth striving for riches, and the more energies would be left over for the cultivation of other accomplishments and just for living more fully. The singular advantage of this dispensation would be that the prime purpose of the redistribution of wealth would plainly not be to promote human equality—since men are not the same except in their rights, which is a shabby, or at any rate a very limited, ideal in itself—but to make the most of human uniqueness. The antithesis of inequality would not be equality but difference. The monoculture of capitalism is above all unjust because it condemns to inferiority all those who cannot shine according to one set of values. Go for pluralism and far more people will be able to develop their own particular talents and qualities to the full and be prized for doing so. The tolerant society would also be the socialist society.

Having touched, however cursorily, on some of the chief arguments, I should now say a little more about what I think has actually happened in applying or not applying these ideas, say since *The Acquisitive Society* was first written. As things have worked out I think there has been a kind of paradox, or what might have seemed like that to Tawney. As I've already said there has not been much perceptible reduction in inequality. But I believe there has been some growth of pluralism. It has often been said that our present age has witnessed the end of ideology, and especially of the socialist and communist religions or ideologies which succeeded Christianity and some other religions in a direct line of descent. That may unfortunately be true of socialism, but it is not in my view true of ideologies generally. One of the things that strikes me about our modern society is not that people lack passionate belief but that their passions are engaged on behalf of such miniature causes, at least compared with the old ones. I do not suppose the proportion of zealots is any less than it ever was, but they are zealots not about changing the grand design of society so much as about a multitude of individual interests, either self-centered or altruistic. Many of them are, it is true, related to the acquisitive society which has made it possible to indulge them. Notice the faraway look of the man squeezing into his wet suit to go sailing in the sea in the middle of winter, and you will see what I mean. Or the owner of the barbecue as he prepares for another evening party. Or the dedicated skier as he waits his turn to sweep down the piste. Or consider the pleasure of the young girl as she takes home and plays the latest hit record. Or the camper fussing over his gear and chatting endlessly and sometimes snobbishly with his fellows about sites and makes of equipment. A friend of mine camping this summer in France was asked with curiosity by her neighboring campers whether the small English tents she was erecting were the undertents. They presumed, or pretended to presume, that she would later be putting up larger, more elaborate structures on top of them.

But even more striking than the cultivation not of the stoicism but of the aesthetic, epicurean, and other delights of affluence is the devout enthusiasm aroused for an array of new cults, or old cults made contemporary, like Yoga and the mysticism of the Orient, football, vegetarianism, Women's Liberation, astrology, the prevention of cruelty to animals, the use of psychedelic drugs, being

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against fluoride in the water or vaccination or the eating of sugar, and the whole complex business of participation in a thousand miniature local crusades. Most strikingly of all, the trade union movement seems to have become progressively more fragmented, with a great deal of vitality at the periphery and very little at the center.

This may not be quite the pluralism Tawney had in mind—he might well have called it fragmentation—but it is a sort of pluralism all the same, and its growth has not, according to the drift of the argument I was developing, done what it should have done. It has not led to greater equality in the old conventional attributes of class. The pluralism has occurred within the existing class structure instead of as an attack on it. This was a trend and a danger that Rita Hinden was very aware of and wrote about many times in her editorials in *Socialist Commentary*. If energies and organization are devoted to a multitude of fringe activities, however fascinating, even though they may be laudable in themselves, there may hardly be any to spare for the more general issues of justice in society. I still think that pluralism is in a democracy a necessary condition of egalitarianism but evidently, as we now see, not a sufficient condition when taken on its own, not something which by itself will foster the cause of equality.

Now as I come toward the end I must try and pull the threads together. To answer the question in the title of the lecture —yes I do think that equality is a dream, one that is not for a long time, if ever, likely to be wholly fulfilled in practice in an industrial society. The acceptance of differentials in wages, prestige, and power, especially when related to competence, goes very deep and although it may change it obviously won't do so quickly. But if the common humanity of mankind is a dream it is one that is and should be constantly redreamed and then filled out in the light of day, on the one hand with policies and on the other with critiques that are apt for their time.

This always needs to be done at those two levels, and the failure of people in the Labour movement to put body into the dream was perhaps partly responsible for the tragic failure of the last Labour government (which I would put along with Munich from my point of view as one of the two greatest political setbacks in this country in my lifetime) to do more than tinker with the problems of social justice. At the one level, of policy, I think some of the things that should be done—if we ever have again a Labour government with the courage of the convictions of a Tawney or a Hinden—are already pretty clear. As one thing, even before the return of such a government, I would like to see every individual socialist who thinks of himself as one to start by covenanting 2 percent of his net income to charities like War on Want, Oxfam, Christian Aid, and Intermediate Technology, which are trying to do something by aid and by precept to reduce the gap between the rich and poor nations, or at any rate to stop it from getting wider. As soon as possible a starred tax system should be introduced allowing people to instruct Inland Revenue to deduct, tax-free, a certain amount extra from their income above ordinary taxes and to pay it to charities whose concern is with overseas aid.

A whole variety of governmental measures designed to achieve the same end is also needed. The percentage of our GNP going in aid to developing countries should rise far above the miserable 0.38 percent it reached last year; the maximum effort should be made to persuade our partners in the Common Market to allow imports in from the developing countries without hindrance; and action should be taken on the other proposals that Roy Jenkins made in his recent speeches on the same subject. I would put next the imposition of a really tough tax on the recipients of all gifts and bequests—this because it is particularly indefensible that people should live, partly or wholly, on the labor of others without contributing anything for it either in effort or competence. And these

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steps should all belong to a comprehensive attempt to change the class structure of the country, and even to help modify that of the world. Unless there is a drastic reduction in inequality, poverty cannot be abolished. For we know, as Titmuss has often pointed out, that there will always be a bottom 10 percent as long as there is any scaling of incomes at all. But if the whole distribution of income were altered, from top to bottom, then even though there would still be a bottom 10 percent they would be sufficiently near the rest above them not necessarily to feel in relative poverty.

Which brings me to my final point. How is the support to be won for such a new root-and-branch attack on the existing social establishment, especially if the more pluralistic society is not so strong an ally as we thought it might be? The first thing is to act on behalf of this cause as all the other pressure groups do. This means strengthening existing organizations of and for the poor and disadvantaged, like the Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter, the Disablement Income Group and Age Concern, the community groups in the Educational Priority Areas, the squatters groups. But they will all be more effective if their efforts are seen as part of that wider strategy which engaged the people whom I mentioned at the beginning of this lecture. To keep that wider strategy up to date one Crosland is not enough, nor one Hinden nor one Tawney. There has never been a more urgent necessity than there is today for restatements of the socialist critique of society and, based on it, for programs of social reform and social revolution.

And we can still succeed. Two weeks ago on my way back from Mauritius I was, for a brief spell, in the Republic of South Africa on the continent whose people Rita Hinden championed over her whole life. Someone I met by chance was a tough Afrikaaner, a fitter in an engineering factory near Johannesburg. He surprised me by saying—"This government of ours does not know what it is doing. Most of the black people alongside me work just as hard as I do. They should get paid the same, but the government and the employers won't do it. It's all wrong, I say, and I mean it." If the sense of human fraternity cannot be extinguished in South Africa it cannot be extinguished anywhere. □

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David Bromwich

Sex in the Head

Last Tango in Paris is an expressionist film in the line of Fritz Lang, Jean-Luc Godard, and Paddy Chayefsky. To admit this at the outset is to minimize any risk of understanding the phenomenon too quickly. Expressionism, after all, seeks to distort. What is lost in fidelity to fact is gained in the imaginative truth of the form: or so we are asked to believe. Lang and Godard belong to the small group of commanding figures in the history of cinema precisely because they knew the character of their enterprise. The refracting lens, throughout Lang's German period and in Godard through the first half of *Weekend,* is altogether under control. On the other hand, Chayefsky is an expressionist by default, a naturalist bent out of shape, and beyond redemption by the facts.

I would say that Bernardo Bertolucci, the director of *Last Tango,* falls somewhere between these poles of genius and intolerable carry-on: much, but not all, of what jangles in his latest film was calculated for effect. The film as we have it is certainly very far from being a masterpiece or a breakthrough. Those kindly and influential critics who struck the note of unfettered praise were speaking, surely, in deference to its promise rather than its performance, and though they are to be commended as, in some obscure way, friends of the art, the continuing success of Chayefsky ought to be a warning that generosity of this order can go too far. Still, when we have allowed for the rallying cries which an ambitious and somewhat botched piece of work may be expected to attract, what accounts for the fervor of our public acceptance of *Last Tango?* The film poses many questions and there are those who will want to think it poses them honestly. It explores and, while appearing to document, exploits our divided conscience about sex.

Paul and Jeanne are footloose in Paris: an American expatriate of about fifty, familiar in type as the outcast writer or actor, and a smart native bourgeoise, quick with the arrogance of youth but still on friendly terms with *Maman.* Paul stands under a bridge and shuts his ears as a train passes overhead, Jeanne does a jump-rope step over the broom of a street sweeper. They meet in an apartment they are both looking to rent, and they circle each other slowly, warily, like jungle beasts savoring the scent of an encounter. The phone rings, a wrong number in this empty place, but Paul and Jeanne hang onto the extensions and listen for the sounds of their breathing. Paul walks over to Jeanne, asks if she will take the apartment for herself, warns her she had better think fast, then sweeps her off her feet in the classic over-the-threshold pose, sets her delicately against the wall, and most indelicately mounts her. After the great first act they fall apart panting, and later, downstairs, Paul indicates that they will have occasion to meet again. As they do. No names, Paul will insist, they can know nothing of each other's lives. Pleased and a little bewildered by her American who is *un peu bizarre,* Jeanne is naive, smirky, and cute. But also shrewd after the ways of her class: when Paul finally overstays his welcome and grows importunate, she murders him as an ordinary rapist, knowing there is no possible motive, hence no crime.

What we, the audience, learn of their lives outside the apartment is interlarded with the

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sexual episodes, which play at high temperature and involve perversions yet are visually never shocking. Paul's wife has just taken her life and he is in ambivalent mourning: she has had at least one infidelity, has been loved and hated. There must be no priests at the funeral, he tells his French mother-in-law, since priests are not respecters of suicides. The mother-in-law is a mope-about hysteric of the most fulsome variety, and we recognize her from many Hollywood vehicles: the scene between her and Marlon Brando is among the poorest in the film. Incidentally, it sounds to an untrained ear as if Brando were improvising some of the dialogue in French. But then his early inventions in English, as in the "no names" sequence, are equally poor. (At this point let me offer a single paradoxical remark about the nature of improvisation: generally, it makes an actor sound like a real person at his worst, that is, when he is measuring every word to determine whether it is what a real person might say. It is at times like these that real people give the impression of being bad actors. The same goes for actors.)

A second counterpoint in the movie is Jeanne's love affair with and impending marriage to an aspiring film-maker. About this aspect of *Last Tango* the reviewers have not noticed the obvious, that it is a parody of Godard, and a parody gone wildly out of control. Jean-Pierre Léaud has a part similar to his own in, say, *Masculine Feminine*, only Bertolucci makes him visibly bloated with the secret narcissism of the Godard adolescent. In case anybody should miss the joke, Jeanne delivers a monologue straight into the camera about her racist peasant housekeeper, her imperialist father, the barnyard animals of her childhood, to serve as a reminder that one has grown used to such things in *La Chinoise* and elsewhere. Yet the send-up is crude, it gets rapidly too extreme, and besides, the given structure of *Last Tango* calls for a seriousness toward Jeanne comparable to the attitude taken toward Paul: at the very least, a serious portrayal of her superficiality. As a result of this hedging we get the merest cipher for one half of the relationship.

All the same, *Last Tango* is impressive in a number of respects. The music, the photography, the music- and film-editing have a highly individual power, a found rythm, which is very rare in movies, and if one did not have the passionately committed mindlessness of the scenario one might indeed suppose it was a great film. The jazz score is by Gato Barbieri, and it sets a hyped-up continuity theme against the romantic pastiche of the tango: the sound begs comparison with Herbie Hancock's jazz compositions for *Blow-Up*—rather a minimal score, in contrast with *Last Tango*'s—and I think gains in the comparison. I will venture that the parallel drawn between this movie and *The Rite of Spring* may be attributed to the syncopated triplets of the theme, mixing, in the mind of the enthusiast, with memories of a vaguely similar effect in Stravinsky. Perhaps it would be best for reviewers not to mix media any more than is necessary.

As for the look of the film, it is dominated by brassy yellows and browns, a fine metaphor for the physical opulence and metaphysical dreariness of this particular affair. Once, creeping on all fours into the apartment, like a cat, Jeanne is caught in mid-stride by the sound of conga drums and continues as if buoyed up by their pulse. When Paul is murdered, he walks out onto a balcony overlooking the city, and the view is a spiritless one, woven of mottled beiges and grays, the facades of anonymous buildings, as the camera fixes upon Paul's last sight on earth before marking the spot where his body lies fallen. The tango itself is a set piece of a kind that Bertolucci has, of course, composed often in the past, though to realize this makes it no less marvelous too see: the tango dancers with their frozen gestures, and Brando, since this is a movie about inventing new gestures, baring his ass and grunting derision.

But it is, alas, the mindlessness of *Last Tango* that has provoked the exaggerated

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critical reaction on both sides. Maybe one ought to call it soullessness. For this quality, whatever its name, is what deprives the characters of their peculiarly human dignity, drags them down—a congenial critic would say "restores" them—to a level of animal subsistence, sets them to fornicating, and cries out to the audience, "This is what you are and what you must be. Contemplate it as you can and learn from it, for here is life, here is destiny." Genitals tugging at each other in the void thus turn into the sum of our experience. Is it any accident therefore that those scenes involving the more gentle and ungenital side of life for Jeanne and Paul utterly fail to satisfy? To be as abrupt as possible: the movie has no heart.

True, Brando is sometimes able to write good period lines from the fifties in his own head. "My father was a drunk, a whore-fucker, barfighter—supermasculine. Tough. My mother was—very poetic, and also a drunk." There is a touching scene where Brando meets his wife's lover, a grim little intellectual who worries about physical fitness, and they are both dressed in the same bathrobe, and Brando wonders what she could ever have seen in him. There is Brando weeping at his wife's bier, cursing and then asking forgiveness, one of the two or three strongest moments in his career. There are, in short, interludes that are loving, direct, artistically worthy. But these are exceptions to the rule. When Paul and Jeanne first slam together and fall to clawing each other, we are shut out from their experience. To much of what happens in the apartment our response is complex—the gallows humor, the recounting of life stories without names ("You've been had, beh-bee," says Jeanne, "I don't want to hear anything about your past"), Jeanne's infatuation with Paul which is also Maria Schneider's excitement about working with Brando: all this is bound to be winning—yet here again it is the failure of the whole and not the triumph of a few moments that bears thinking about. Art has a special context: it necessarily enforces a certain detachment. And it remains a question whether we can ever know as much about two people from watching the fluids that pass between them as we can learn from hearing them exchange words now and then.

What, in the last analysis, are we being asked to judge in *Last Tango*? Is it a film by Bernardo Bertolucci or a private catharsis of, by, and for Marlon Brando? "If Brando's gone through all this, then we can go through it with him"—or words to that effect—is the line I remember one reviewer as taking. Myself, I would feel disqualified from speaking of any film from such a premise, and I am accordingly happy to find that there are others who feel differently. But on the more prosaic ground that belongs to art offered up to public scrutiny, *Last Tango* is guilty of a pervasive bad faith. The cynicism about sex in *Last Tango* is the inverse but still the near neighbor of the sentimentality about love that suffused Bertolucci's first film, *Before the Revolution*: and of sentimentality I take J. D. Salinger's useful definition that it means to show more tenderness toward a thing than God shows. *Last Tango* is positively doting in its cruelty toward the people it depicts, and, in forcing his tender hatred beyond God's, Bertolucci has eschewed the appropriate middle distance of the artist.

Of the sins an artist can commit, hatred of his own characters is surely among the least pardonable. There were portents of this flaw in Bertolucci throughout *The Conformist* and in parts of *Spider's Stratagem,* and they have now taken on their full significance: only a time like ours, in which the ideology of sex looms so large, could have mistaken the quality for something else—daring, perhaps? In any event I want to make my meaning plain and define hatred by its opposite. There are artists who do not become as evil as their subject, who will not compromise themselves on this essential matter of stance. Examples, in the novel, would be Tolstoy, Dickens, Faulkner; in the cinema, Renoir, Truffaut, Bergman. It may be that Bertolucci has closer affinities with an author

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like Montherlant. Certainly, *Last Tango* is his weakest film to date, for in this instance his abdication of feeling is also an abdication of intelligence.

Inseparable from its smallness of spirit is the degree to which, though ambiguously, *Last Tango* is a purveyor of an ideology of sex. For Bertolucci has constructed his movie, as it were, on an axiom. Life may be split into two components: the times when we are intimately involved with the flesh of another person, and when we are not. If we make ourselves aware of the dichotomy and observe how the two divisions of our existence reflect on one another, we will have discovered something profound. Now this seems to me a remarkable assumption; but there can be no doubt as to its centrality in the film. Paul is the ostensible but Jeanne the true believer in this ideology, and when Paul violates its law and wants to isolate sex in a single room no longer, she regards the offense as punishable by death. How far does Bertolucci himself believe in his chosen axiom? Enough so that he can have us agonizing over a tongue-tied Brando who tirelessly expounds the philosophy that nothing matters except what happens "in here." The "uterine colors" of the apartment, much publicized by the director, leave no one guessing about how far in we are symbolically meant to go.

The tragic conclusion of *Last Tango* seems to say that all was not well—nor can it ever be?—in this claustrophobic paradise, yet the weight of nonsense that has gone before is just too much for one turn of the plot to cancel out. In the meantime, wth Paul buggering Jeanne, Jeanne manually buggering Paul, Paul watching Jeanne masturbate herself when he is too surly to assist, the film has put no orifice out of bounds in its dogged insistence that this is how a man and a woman play out the passions of their deepest selves. The final turn of the screw, if I may say so, is the narrative twist that sets Brando as a foil against Léaud, with the implication that Brando in sex is a more resourceful improviser, a better artist, than this Godardian dilettante could hope to be. I cannot see how *Last Tango* would be thought pornography, in the sense by which it declares itself through arousing the spectator. Yet the film is curiously doctrinaire in its advocacy of a view which, if consistently adopted, would elevate pornography to the status of a very high form of art indeed.

I should like to be convinced that in pursuing a Chayefskian earnestness—the dialogue gives plenty of support to this apparent conceit—Bertolucci has deserted his muse, that it will be a temporary lapse, that the symphonically haunted visual surfaces and verbal echoes of *The Conformist* still represent his best vein. The climate of opinion being what it is, however, he finds himself praised for all that is meretricious in *Last Tango* and ignored for the rest. We know that the consensus of any age gets what it wants and, when confronted with something that looks a bit like what it wants, dutifully hacks off what remains as excess. But the consensus just now, especially among intellectuals, is a peculiar one. Its urgencies are quite narrow, they have to do with sex, and the tone of righteousness with which they are accepted, or acquiesced in, may fairly prompt one to speak of decadence.

It is altogether fitting that the man who has contributed more than anyone else to the making of this climate, Norman Mailer, should have designed a lengthy apology for *Last Tango* and then buttressed his appreciation with a criticism of the movie for not going far enough. I intend to argue against Mailer, and shall do so on the following basis: he is an irrationalist but an impure one. Thus, while a good many of his favorite notions tend toward the inaccessibly private, and do not ask to be approved by other men, they are still couched in a language rational men speak. There is in most of his writing an implied appeal to principles that can be commonly agreed on. Read Lawrence's literary criticism, read Nietzsche's music criticism, and you will find no such appeal.

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If Mailer were to transform himself, like these figures, into a thoroughgoing irrationalist, he would not make himself a better novelist. He would merely have become a more honest man. Yet I think we must allow that his impurity derives from the circumstance that Mailer does not, when all is said, agree with Nietzsche or Lawrence in rejecting out of hand the life of society: that his name, at this writing, continues to shine from the masthead of a quarterly socialist journal testifies to his own belief that he is a reformer, perhaps in some sense a revolutionary, but not a wholly destructive force in his intended relation to society. In this, in his stature as a commentator on the cultural issues of the day, in his brilliance and arrogance and half-willed craziness, and in the unstable ratio throughout his work of difficult sense to pernicious nonsense, he most nearly resembles Thomas Carlyle. Late in Carlyle's career, Henry James, Sr., complained of him that he had grown to be "a palpable nuisance." One may feel this way about Mailer and yet understand that his presence, like Carlyle's in his time and place, seems to be a mixed blessing that is entirely necessary to our culture. All the more reason, then, to hold the man strictly accountable to his own terms of discourse, and, for once in his life, take his thinking solemnly enough to confute it.

Mailer's essay is entitled "A Transit to Narcissus"—the significance of this eludes me—it appeared in the *New York Review of Books,* May 17, 1973, and it comes with illustrations: a caricature of Brando, and then two quasi-antique etchings that depict, in turn, a man and a women undressing and a young maidservant looking through the peephole of master's door. These set the tone. After a survey of the audience in whose company he saw *Last Tango*, the men with "wife-swapping mustaches" and so forth, Mailer intimates that his initial pleasure at the sex in this movie was followed by disappointment. For the sex has been simulated, whereas "Brando's real cock up Schneider's real vagina would have brought the history of film one huge march closer to the ultimate experience it has promised since its inception (which is to re-embody life)." Again, in this spirit, he remarks that *Last Tango* had great possibilities because it dealt with the grandest of subjects. "Two people are going to fuck in a room until they arrive at a transcendent recognition or some death of themselves." Let us stop for a moment and, at the risk of seeming overly literal, ask some questions. Which movies, in particular, have sealed the promise that the ultimate experience of cinema is to reembody life? Are not movies rather a form of art concerned to give a picture of life? And in what sense does Mailer use the word "re-embody"? When I reembody something, do I make a faithful rendering of it according to my own imaginative need, or do I make a simulacrum? Is it Chaplin Mailer speaks of, or Fellini? Or is it *Deep Throat*? Perhaps we are to ponder some essence-of-movie exclusive of all the movies yet made? Mailer has already confessed that "There is a monumental abstractedness about hard core." How would it become any the less abstract when the organ we happened to be watching belonged to Brando? Or, for that matter, to Mailer? For it is he and not Brando who publicly states his conviction that we can fuck ourselves into transcendence. It would be ungracious to request a more detailed account, but having committed myself this far I cannot resist the temptation. Since he has, presumably, known transcendence once in a while, though not without the corresponding times when he knew "some death" of himself, what can Mailer reveal to us about the promised land of which fucking-as-such afforded a glimpse? To what omega point of the divine mystery was he than made privy?

No doubt there is a religious element in Mailer's thinking, and to the extent that there is my questions are unfair. Yet his theology has about it something of the contrived. I must say that I have never been able to believe it, which is to admit equally: I have

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never been able to believe that he believes it. His God is by now, as one sees from cross-examining a single word, utterly bound up with his airiest rhetoric. The truth is that sex depends on conditions quite apart from the relative charm of this or that organ. The man, the woman, the time, the place, the juncture in life, not only chronologically but also temperamentally, all of these things make a difference, and you are never going to succeed in keeping them out of the bedroom unless you are willing to become an emotional cripple beforehand. About sex isolated from life as about sex isolated from art, there is always and only that monumental abstractedness.

One stricture, in my opinion, takes care of the entire world of pornography. It is that art ought to be neither better nor worse than life: art is separate but always equal. Pornography can make no such claim. Two people fucking on a screen are simply an inferior version of two people fucking.

However, to speak of pornography in so limited a context is to misread Mailer's own commitment to it—for he imagines working a change on the base metal of skin-flicks to produce some higher luminous alloy—and at the same time to underestimate his importance in areas of our public existence where pornography figures only as one symptom among others. *The Deer Park* and *An American Dream* are, in fact, indirect source material for *Last Tango,* but what these works share is not, strictly regarded, the pornographic imagination. Rather, it is the bold and steady avowal that the sexual arena is our great domain of conquest, of marvelous victory and ignominious defeat, the proving ground for whatever may be dear to us which quite universally, as in *Last Tango,* splits life into sex and not-sex and which has a bearing on everything around it of base to superstructure. I have said that the assumption seems to me remarkable. I must add that we all know it to be dehumanizing. Mailer has often professed to believe in the devil, but, though he has earned every right to be called an inverter of values, he is himself less formidable than the Fallen Prince for this reason: he does not yet comprehend how serious his own plight has become for himself and for others. To the distinctive modern malaise which Professor Marcuse once termed "repressive desublimation" Mailer has lent his theoretical support, and he has done so by regularly violating the whole man in favor of the—if one may employ a helpful mixed metaphor—divining-rod man. Possibly the justification for this comes in *An American Dream* when a voice representing the hero's conscience-cum-libido says to him, "The sensible are never free." But if by freedom one means a capacity for sustaining affection for people who will deliver no reward, for living and acting with decency and self-command, for entering into sex as something more than a randomly roving id, for taking part in all those rich and various activities which require for their satisfaction a degree of consistent self-knowledge, then on this calculus only the sensible man can ever be free. I can think of no more terrible portrait of an unfree soul than that long, depressing, and indigestible Victorian document, *My Secret Life,* whose author is without a name.

Against the ethic which identifies freedom with a full possession of oneself, Mailer and Bertolucci make their case most roundly in pleading the virtues of improvisation. Much of the improvisational acting in *Last Tango* involves the spectacle of Brando defending his practice of improvisational sex, but there are also, of course, vignettes of the practice itself, including the notorious line about the farts of a dying pig together with Brando's Maileresque elucidation of the anality of social conventions. The latter part of Mailer's own essay is given over to a defense of improvisation, which, like sex, he wants to see establish itself deeper in movies than it has done in *Last Tango.* Of Brando Mailer asserts: "If he has been our first actor for decades, it is because he has given us, from the season he arrived in *Streetcar,* a greater sense

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of improvisation out of the lines of a script than any other actor." But of those other professionals he can yet say that they are better qualified to come alive in movies on their own than with the help of a writer or a director: "Are they not more likely to contain instinctive knowledge in their ambulating meat?"

No; because to meditate the feel of a living thing takes more time than a split second while the cameras are running. No; Brando has certainly improvised in the past, with far more grace than in *Last Tango,* but he is our most powerful actor because he puts the toughest fiber of tension into lines that were there *before* him. There is no need to pursue this any further. For Mailer has offered his own improvisational films for us to brood on, and we have merely to ask: why are they so bad? In some part the answer is that Mailer is without visual sense, that he and his supporting actors seem to have only one mood (the histrionic), that his movies place altogether too low a value on coherence. But a larger issue is at hand. Apparently, Mailer feels sure that his movies are at any rate more likely to interest a discerning public than the average Hollywood fare, whereas in truth his product differs from Hollywood's mainly in being more shoddily put together and less diverting. But he has found out the theory of film. If he of all others has been vouchsafed this treasure, must not the upshot be vital? We can put a question in response. How would Mailer feel about a young writer who, having settled down to the typewriter from some less august trade, cried out that he had discovered the experience of which writing over the centuries had given only a dim promise, that experience being the profound visionary dazzle that comes of an abstention from all revision? A director like Godard can make good movies with a considerable element of improvisation, but then, he has lived a lifetime with his craft—just as Mailer, if he should choose on occasion not to rewrite, has lived with his. Discipline has not ceased to be the working habit of art. To the critic who insists that movies are a radically new medium, hence demand a less severe regimen than whatever forms have preceded them, we can reply: clear your mind of cant.

The situation is disheartening. We could wish these little lessons were gratuitous. Yet Mailer is one of those who pretend, in Emerson's lovely phrase, to publish in the parlor the secrets of the laboratory. After hearing him out, we are obliged to reaffirm the distinctions he wants to obscure. Art is at the eye of every turbulence. This does not mean that it is dispassionate. It is concerned with life and the things of life. But it holds out no transcendence beyond itself. Works of art in history, like people in the world, are quite removed from Mailer's conception of them, and not because they are simpler than he supposes but because they are subtler. Despite his pose of reverentially lifting the veil, Mailer is the most reductive of psychologists.

As an event which brings into conjunction the personalities of Marlon Brando and Norman Mailer, the excitement over *Last Tango* has a special pathos. How strangely their lives seem to have run parallel, with the unjustly low reputation of one decade making way for the fashionable applause of the next. How incalculably they have been helped and hurt by each other's existence. I will register my own sense that they are two of the great American geniuses; surely, they are among the few artists whom everyone cares about. Yet one is disagreeably conscious in both instances of the chronic lack of an enabling means for putting the energy into action. Always, with Mailer, the idea of a given performance is more impressive than what is performed. As, with Brando in *Last Tango,* the face is infinitely more eloquent than the words. To construct an aesthetics of performance around this melancholy fact is to make a sublime necessity out of failure. To compound the mystification, by deriving an aesthetics of sex from *Last Tango,* is to mistake the Slough of Despond for the Celestial Railroad. □

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Czeslaw Milosz

On Censorship

The word "censorship" immediately provokes a hostile reaction since traditionally it indicates the intention of authorities, whether clerical or secular, to curtail freedom. The very essence of Western technological civilization is incompatible with censorship, for the latter presupposes an authority to decree what should be allowed and what forbidden —whereas the entire adventure of discoveries and inventions began with a revolt against authority. Any school book can furnish abundant examples of censors making fools of themselves, beginning with Gallileo's persecutors and ending with judges ordering literary works confiscated for immorality, precisely those works which subsequently enter the classical canon of required school reading.

Nevertheless, although parliamentary systems have guaranteed freedom of scientific inquiry and the right to proclaim political heresies, there has been an effort in our century, as in the past, to retain the concept of an offense against what is called public morality. Such attempts, as we can see today, have been doomed to defeat on account of the ever greater intimidation of censors who have been branded fools and reactionaries. Of considerable importance here has been the anxiety of the churches ready to make concessions just to maintain their new image as enlightened and progressive institutions. The citadel of so-called public morality fell as soon as the first gap appeared in the wall—general agreement as to the inviolability of a work of art, i.e., the agreement that anything may be depicted in words, stone, line, or color if the goal is "artistic." Twenty years ago the works of Henry Miller were banned in America, today they can be bought in paperback. This one example is enough to illustrate the general change.

Censorship, or the lack of it, seems to originate in a fundamental choice whose consequences cannot be imagined while that choice is being made. If, in certain cases, the freedom of the individual should be limited in the name of the common good, a very great good would justify very great limitations—which means the same as great power in the hands of those who are to judge what is good and what is bad for the community. If, however, that privilege is not conferred upon anyone, it becomes hard to deny that everyone is entitled to proclaim his own philosophy even if it offers profound and fundamental reasons for counseling murder and cannibalism.

In Paris in 1934 the Surrealists published a collection of poetry in honor of an adolescent criminal, Violette Nozières, who was sentenced by a court of law to a correctional home for poisoning both her parents. The Surrealists, combining Freud with Marx, dreamed of a revolution that would overthrow private property as well as bourgeois morality and change everyone into a poet or stenographer of his own unconscious. Violette's parents—they were bourgeois, they oppressed her, demanding she obey them, forbidding her to spend the night away from home, and so on. She poisoned them, thereby

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giving proof that her norms were those of the free society of the future. She had committed "a revolutionary act."

Although in the poems praising her action one can detect some reflection of that collective self-disgust that was quite widespread in the France of the '30s, the volume appeared in a small edition and its influence surely did not extend beyond the circles of artistic bohemia. It lost out in competition with another European book, published somewhat earlier but read by millions of people, and which also prescribed a better arrangement of society: *Mein Kampf*.

France retained legislation directed against certain acts outraging public decency, hence the trials of publishing houses specializing in pornography. No one, however, disturbed publishers printing pornographic books in English, later to be smuggled into England, Canada, and the United States. As recently as ten years ago, I read the *Memoirs of Fanny Hill,* in the only edition then available, the Parisian one. Today that "classical" pornographic novel, endowed with all the merits of 18th-century style, can be bought in paperback anywhere in America. I do not take it upon myself to say whether this is because the book has been acknowledged as a "work of art" or because the line dividing works having artistic aims from those not having such aims has become hopelessly blurred. The author, John Cleland, who wrote the book for money and later tried to redeem that youthful indiscretion by composing pious tracts, would be more than a little surprised were he to see his prank placed in the same class as Homer's rhapsodies. The book's aim is quite limited: it presents sexual excercises in the most tempting possible light and could probably serve as a stimulant for bored lovers and sluggish married couples. Moreover, the passing of time has lent Cleland's novel almost bucolic features. One reads it with nostalgia on account of its flagrantly artificial realism and its affirmation of simple pleasures enjoyed without hatred for the world.

The works of the Marquis de Sade, including his *Philosophy in the Bedroom,* are also available in paperback, and what is of interest to me here is my instinctive opposition. I allow two possibilities: either my mind, formed by Catholicism, Marxism, or just the historical convulsions of Europe, is somewhat totalitarian and accepts in silence that the spiritual nourishment given the "masses" should be controlled, thus usurping for itself knowledge of what is healthy and unhealthy for them or, as a result of the distance I have to the morals prevailing around me, I dare to detect a problem where others do not, since for them it would be uncomfortable to do so. *Philosophy in the Bedroom* is undoubtedly the most immodest work of literature ever written and not because it depicts an aristocratic circle collectively sampling all forms of copulation with a marked predilection for sodomy. The dialogue form lends the work a quality of parody, of *opera buffa,* and one reads it with a smile, though it soon gives way to boredom since the endless descriptions of erotic frenzy are monotonous.

But de Sade is also proposing a new morality and in this he is a forerunner of the Surrealists who published poetry in honor of the poisoner, Violette Nozières. Divine and human laws were invented to deprive the individual of his natural privileges. Liberating himself from lies and hypocrisy, the perfect libertine appoints his own pleasure as the sole standard of good and evil. Divine and human laws cannot, however, be overthrown effectively until they are attacked at their very bases, the point where they are automatically accepted by everyone. Even the most daring philosopher shudders before crossing a certain line. Only the readiness to commit murder for one's own pleasure proves that the fetters of a completely artificial commandment have been left behind. *Philosophy in the Bedroom* is a treatise on murder. The 16-year-old Eugènie is initiated by degrees; at first, sexually, but later on, when the

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members of the circle are emboldened to begin breaking down the prohibitions she has received at home, she is already an eager student of their far-reaching sciences. She learns that one is free to kill. But in common belief there is something worse than killing a human being and thus Eugènie passes her examination in another fashion: she admits that she hates her bigoted mother and joyfully consents to the plan for punishing her. She looks on, clapping her hands, as her mother is lured to the chateau and raped, not only to humiliate her, but also to infect her with syphilis.

In the fate of the Marquis de Sade we see that a public opinion bound to a definite moral code was ill-disposed to such philosophical proposals and that it displayed great self-confidence in combating them. While the printing of such works as *Philosophy in the Bedroom* for mass consumption can be explained as a weakening of the standards of judgment, another factor probably weighs more heavily here: the unspoken assumption that the influence of the written word on institutions and morals is small or nonexistent.

And here everything I have written so far about censorship seems completely old-fashioned to me, as old-fashioned as regimes in which the state pays a large number of functionaries solely to pencil out whole sentences from novels or, when the need arises, to improve a poet's verses. For one must be able to see the printed page along with everything else that surrounds us in quantities that would have confounded our ancestors. Such multitudes of people, ideas, means of communication, goods produced by technology and thrown out half-consumed! The Marquis de Sade was a total revolutionary, the most radical of the radical, and he set about his philosophical enterprise seriously. But his books, like books in general, now fill another function than they did once. They are exhibits in an enormous, endlessly extended museum in which works of art from all civilizations and epochs—codexes, Bibles, Korans—neighbor each other in a syncretic turmoil. The most extreme injunctions neutralize and demolish each other, immediately turning into "culture." The technical apparatus that produces the spoken, written, and pictorial language intercepts and co-opts every revolt for its own use, including the revolt against it. The programs of anarchists, predictions of the end of the world, calls for political assassination, encouragements to flee to the forests and mountains in order to devote oneself to contemplation, advertisements of leagues whose members get together and "groove," drug propaganda, hymns in honor of totalitarian regimes—all have equal rights and satisfy the needs of the market. A dash of apocalypse or revolution can liven up a product and were it lacking, it would be necessary to invent it for commercial purposes.

Censorship as prohibition thus loses its *raison d'être* when the tangible material world remains resistant to everything that is stated in terms of "as if," that is, to language, concepts, symbols. The tangible, material world can get along nicely without ideas; ubiquitous necessity replaces them. Man as an economic creature behaves in one way rather than in another, not because philosophical generalizations arise in his head, but because he must satisfy his needs and can do so only by submitting to laws independent of his will. Such at least appears to be the hidden premise allowing one to relate with more tolerance than hostility to culture, to the museum, to treat it as something that "satisfies intellectual curiosity" and also softens the severity of life.

To be sure, this premise is somewhat dubious since the means of mass communication, i.e., language, are the driving force of an economy that is constantly creating new needs with the aid of advertising. Moreover, it is not certain whether the ideas locked in the reservoir of "culture" will always be content to remain there.

The Marquis de Sade, rendered less shocking by his status as a literary classic and less

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attractive by his style from another era, is also further neutralized by new rivals in extremity who keep appearing every day. Sex and violence are a bit too conventional in his writings, not photographic enough. It is not often that the public's apathy, a result of constant bombardment, is overcome and some measure of renown achieved. Terseness, forcibleness, and brutality of expression are rewarded, and all ideas are simplified so that they may be conveyed by means of the most obvious and tangible "facts" without involving any complicated reasoning. These requirements are exactly the opposite of those found in systems where the market is scorned, where language becomes a labyrinth of mutable meanings, where the censorship frugally portions out "facts," though great effort goes into their interpretation. The language of naturalistic, almost clinical description seems particularly effective in the struggle for attention and money—while the interpretation of a work, on the other hand, is built into its very structure, concealed, and the phenomena described tend to pass for reality itself. The result is to favor anyone who shouts loudly, i.e., sex and violence get center stage. The word, moreover, is in competition with still and moving pictures, which are winning the race for expressiveness and in turn yield to the demands of the highest bidder.

Our eyes are spared nothing. Scenes which not long ago could only be found in the novels of Cleland or de Sade are right here in front of me on the screen. The torments people inflict upon each other, murder, slaughter, war, can be seen while we are sitting at home (on color television). Whether someone is murdering or being murdered makes no difference: you watch. Nor does it matter if the author, director, or photographer want to stimulate or to warn, since the means they use are the same. The film *Bonny and Clyde* may be taken as an example of this ambiguity. The story of a pair of gangsters is presented as "real history" with naturalistic precision. But that in no way excludes "tendencies," to use an old expression. The viewer is given an unflattering picture of the small towns of the American Midwest in the 1930s. The horrifying spiritual emptiness, the meaninglessness of life reduced to chasing after a living leaves the more imaginative individual only one way out: gangsterism, that heroic epos of trampled souls. Possibly all America was like that then, although one suspects that a shift from today to yesterday has taken place here because this is exactly how younger, educated Americans see life in a small town —stunted, debased, meaningless—and they will flee from it anywhere, even to Hollywood.

The film *Bonny and Clyde,* as opposed to the real Bonny and Clyde who, it seems, were considerably more prosaic bandits, is about poor people deprived of their human heritage who shoot other people because that is the only way they can regain their dignity, their right to hope. The hero's sexual impotence is obviously symbolic, indicating his inner rejection of poverty and fundamental deprivation. Thus it is a film of social criticism, different from the films of social criticism made before World War II. Then, as in *The Grapes of Wrath,* the emphasis was on injustice and material poverty, while here, in accord with another intellectual fashion, the emphasis is on alienation, spiritual poverty. Not the least and perhaps even the most essential thing in the film are the hunks of bloody, agonized flesh, in color, all that which the camera would not have dared to show a few decades ago. Not to mention the film's educational influence. For students at Berkeley, *Bonny and Clyde* was a spectacle arousing pity, directly against violence and indirectly against the war in Vietnam. But certainly many others who saw it were stimulated in a different manner, delighting in the poetry of rebellion and the well-aimed pistol shots. The point is that neither the former nor the latter will ever be able to erase those hunks of bloody flesh from their imagination.

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Our imagination has a greater capacity than that of previous generations. Horror was then, as it is now, a part of existence, but formerly things were arranged so that horror was screened off from everyday life. Even in the most sinister countries, as, for example, in the industrializing England that inspired Karl Marx's wrath, there were zones of gentleness and tranquillity. In Russia the Siberian penal colonies remained an obscure menace and even Dostoevsky in his *Notes from the Dead* omitted a great deal. Accounts of the poverty of peasants seemed like news from some exotic country. The hunting of Negroes in Africa and the transportation of slaves undoubtedly troubled the minds of Europe's inhabitants, yet not so very much since it happened far away and their eyes were not exposed to the sight of torture. People were killed in war, but no one filmed it live. Humanity was divided into those who spoke but knew, or wanted to know little, and and those who knew a great deal but were silent.

All the bedrooms, all the battlefields! Bhuddists burning themselves alive in protest against the war died in an arena greater than any in ancient Rome. And in Vietnam, also for the first time, the enemy has been fired upon and men have fallen while being filmed. Europeans, inclined to self-pity, whose memories have retained incredible scenes, perhaps felt robbed since the knowledge of certain dismal features of human nature has ceased to be the exclusive property of those directly participating in the events. Did we not see, while drinking beer, the chief of the Saigon police kill an officer of the Vietcong, a prisoner of war, by shooting him in the temple? Did we not see Oswald, shot by Ruby, clutch at his stomach? Did we not see children burned by napalm? And Robert Kennedy falling the second after Sirhan shot him?

Many years ago, right after the war, during my first stay in America, I had a conversation with a certain famous writer, no doubt a humanitarian, about the Negro ghettos. From him I heard that in spite of everything things were getting better and better. My surprise stayed with me for a long time after that conversation: why did he say that, he whose works, translated into many languages, are like ancient tragedies told in prose? Even he, it seems, had to arrange things so the truth would be dismissed from consciousness, just like those numerous Europeans I knew who didn't wish to learn of the prisons and concentration camps since that would have weakened their faith in their party or leader. Things have not been much simplified for gentle liberals of that writer's type, for the hellish aura of the ghettos and the barracks for farm workers emanates from the television, settling like a toxic mist on the living-room furniture.

It would be naïve to forget the great poverty of current information and the influence of all sorts of editing done by a censorship which works behind the scenes, but often in the open as well. That, however, is not a poverty of "facts," which are the more marketable as they are more shocking. And so the imagination must accommodate the pain, debasement, violence, poverty, the absurdity of the beliefs and morals of the whole world, nothing is placated, nothing tamed by thought which, after all, does cure us of our anxiety a little if, asking "why?," we receive the answer: "because of." The world beats on us like unreason incarnate, like the creation of some mad gigantic brain. Can one accept that entire burden and agree that what is, simply is, and that's that? One can, but only by ruminating in a state of brutish contemplation like a cow. If we are capable of compassion and at the same time are powerless, then we live in a state of angry exasperation. Here surely is one of the causes of the ferocity which I have elsewhere called neo-Manichean.

Translated from Polish by RICHARD LOURIE □

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Michael Harrington

The Welfare State and Its Neoconservative Critics

The failures of the welfare state in the sixties have served as stimulus for, and rationale of, the rise of neoconservative thought in the seventies.

The neoconservative ideologues base themselves on what they regard as the data of the sixties, but they do not take into theoretical account how the limitations of the period permeate their evidence and skew their conclusions. They universalize about social policy, equality, the professionalization of reform, and so on, when actually they are talking about what was done, and not done, in a specific political and social context. As a result, they lack a sense of what might be done under other circumstances—and of the degree to which "circumstances" themselves are aspects of a structure of power created by struggle, not destiny.

I will challenge this approach on three different levels. First, I differ as to at least some of the facts. The neoconservatives tend to exaggerate the amount of social innovation attempted in the sixties, mistaking promises for operational plans and ignoring the hidden agenda established by the priorities of power. So what they offer as *Realpolitik* is actually rooted in a certain naiveté. Second, their interpretations of the data, even when the latter are accurate, abstract from the unique historical setting—the late capitalist welfare state—which largely determines how the data function. Third, their methodological errors have political significance leading them to counsel a national policy of timidity, which is the cause of, not the solution to, most of the problems they pose.

I will take three men as representative of this neoconservative trend: Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Daniel Bell. There are obvious ambiguities in my choice of examples. Two of them, Glazer and Moynihan, have sometimes spoken favorably of conservatism, but Bell, as far as I know, has not. Two of them, Bell and Glazer, were public supporters of McGovern in 1972; Moynihan was silent on his vote saying that a Democrat who had been in a Republican administration should stay out of the campaign. All of them—and particularly Glazer—advocate various liberal reforms, and Bell may still consider himself a man of the Left. Yet whatever their personal predilections, their ideas have a consistency and import which in the recent period have been conservative. I honor them when they contradict their own premises, but unfortunately they do not accompany their essays to explain to the reader their velleities to the contrary. I discuss them, then, as a social-intellectual phenomenon, not as individuals.[1]

In thus criticizing these pessimistic think-

[1] If I were to get into biography, I would make an analogy between the neoconservatives, who are disappointed liberals, and the mystics and religionists who fled in disenchantment from the New Left. The sixties satisfied no one.

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ers, I do not suggest that there are "easy answers" to the issues of the seventies. There are, as the neoconservatives insist at every turn, unintended consequences which sometimes overwhelm the best-intentioned plans. Of course! But this constant harping on the complexity of social policy has itself become a new oversimplification. Therefore this essay will conclude on what by now may seem a subtle and obscure truth: that there *are* some solutions to some of our problems.

I

To begin with, there is the neoconservative version of what actually happened in the sixties.

The government did too much. In *The Politics of the Guaranteed Annual Income,* Moynihan offers a statement of this theme:

> A further argument which in retrospect may be adduced on behalf of the new conservatism is that diffusing social responsibility for social outcomes tends to retard the rise of social distrust when the promised or presumed outcome does not occur. The modern welfare state was getting into activities no one understood very well. It had not reached the point of picking every man a wife, but it was getting close enough to other such imponderables to find itself increasingly held to account for failures in areas where no government could reasonably promise success.
>
> The conservative argument had heft. This became even more evident in the course of the 1960s as the Federal government undertook an unprecedented range of social initiatives designed to put an end to racial and ethnic discrimination, to poverty, and even also to unequal levels of achievement among groups variously defined by race, class, religion, national origin, and sex, primarily through the strategy of providing new, or "enriched," social services.

Moynihan, as will be seen shortly, turns out to be a most persuasive witness against his own case. Yet the theme of "too much government intervention," which he states here so straightforwardly, is crucial to the neoconservative approach. In vulgarized version it also appears in George Wallace's racist Populism with its attack on the "pointy headed bureaucrats" in Washington; in Richard Nixon's reactionary charge that the sixties liberals (among whom some would count Moynihan himself) "threw money" at problems; and even in the agitation of some advocates of "community control" on the Left. Here, however, I am concerned with its sophisticated variant.

The difficulty with this interpretation of the sixties is that the central event it describes—a pervasive government intrusion into the private sphere—*never took place.*

Moynihan lists three areas in his indictment of liberal ultrareformism: ending racial and ethnic discrimination, abolishing poverty, and promoting equal achievement by means of enriched social services. If, however, one examines the record, his case simply does not hold up. The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 hardly deal with "imponderables." In legislation that was long overdue, the Congress provided some minimal guarantees of basic rights in public accommodations and voting. Southern racists regarded that as intolerable interference with the states' right to be Jim Crow. Moynihan and the rest of the neoconservatives did not, happily, share that assessment; they favored these laws. Moreover, the 1964 and 1965 measures must certainly be regarded as successful examples of government action: the "promised or presumed outcome" *did* occur.

Then there is the supposedly excessive federal involvement in the war on poverty and the related attempt to end "unequal levels of achievement among groups . . . through the strategy of providing new, or 'enriched' social services." This last point does not attack "affirmative action" programs or inveigh against quotas (a neoconservative criticism which will be taken up in due course). Rather, it opposes the "service strategy" in aiding the poor, as a means of obtaining equality of result. As a Nixon counselor, Moynihan made this a major

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argument in persuading the President to adopt the "incomes strategy" of the Family Assistance Plan (FAP). Right now, however, the question is relatively simple: did the government in fact innovate extensively to end racism, poverty, and inequality in the sixties?

In the same book in which he charges overreaching federal involvement, Moynihan answers this question brilliantly. He writes,

> The social reforms of mid-decade had been oversold, and, with the coming of the war, underfinanced to the degree that seeming failure could be ascribed almost to intent. There was indeed considerable social change going on, and much of it in the direction most desired by those who were discontented, but it was progress clearly linked to the economic boom brought on by the war, which made it difficult to take much satisfaction in it.[2]

The government's own figures corroborate Moynihan's judgment that the reforms of the sixties were "oversold and underfinanced." Between 1955 and 1965, the Brookings Institution study of the 1973 Budget shows, there was practically no change in federal civilian expenditures as a percentage of GNP. Then, between 1965 and 1970, that percentage almost doubled. But when one looks at where this quantum leap occured, it does not support the thesis of widespread federal innovation in social policy.

Between 1960 and 1970, there was a $44.3 billion rise in the funds for Social Security and Medicare ($33.9 billion and $10.4 billion respectively). This was three times the increased expenditure of public assistance (welfare, Medicaid, food stamps, housing subsidies, student aid). Social Security is neither innovative nor intrusive for —as Nathan Glazer pointed out in the May 1973 *Commentary*—"the program's objectives are clear and simple, and thus it is easy to evaluate." Medicare can be criticized—primarily on the grounds that it is an utterly inadequate installment on national health insurance—but its difficulties certainly do not derive from too much federal experimentation with the "imponderables" of social policy.

In the Budget of the United States government for 1974, these patterns of expenditures are projected up to 1975. In the 1955–75 period, that Budget tells us, the "human resources" percentage of the Budget will have increased from 21.1 percent to 64.8 percent, or from $14.5 billion to $134.9 billion. But of that total, more than 70 percent, or over $93 billion, is accounted for by Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, veterans' benefits, and aid to the blind, aged, and handicapped. By contrast, the Office of Economic Opportunity, a quintessential Great Society agency, received less than $10 billion in the nine years between its creation under Johnson and its dismemberment under Nixon, with a peak appropriation for a single year of $1.9 billion in 1969. And even that figure overstates the federal largesse in this area, since by 1969 a significant portion of OEO funds were going, directly or indirectly, to private business paid to hire hard-core unemployed—whom they probably would often have hired anyway.

Thus, Edward Banfield, a conservative conservative who sometimes fellow-travels with the neoconservatives, is quite wrong when he says that "it was not for lack of money that the Great Society programs failed. Some of the principal efforts—Model Cities, for example—had more of it than they could spend." In fact, as Nathan Glazer has remarked, in the "most original area"

[2] Why does Moynihan contradict himself? The answer is, I suspect, biographical and therefore beyond the bounds of this essay. But let me simply note that Moynihan, the assistant secretary of labor for policy research under Kennedy and Johnson, knew that the "service strategy" was pathetically funded, while Moynihan, the counselor to President Nixon, felt that he could win over the President to the Family Assistance Plan (which was a real accomplishment) by attacking the "service strategy" in more traditional, Nixonian terms.

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of Great Society innovation—such neighborhood-controlled programs as Model Cities and Community Action—there was "not very much" money. In 1972 (the 1974 Federal Budget tells us) Model Cities spent all of $500 million, and it is quite clear that one of the reasons this program did not live up to its expectations was, and is, "lack of money."

II

Why then, if the funds for innovating programs were so scant, is there such a resonance to Moynihan's charge? Why has Nixon made such political mileage out of just such allegations?

First of all, the frantic style of the Johnson administration convinced people that the government was intervening in every area of life. Moynihan, for instance, notes that the New Towns in Towns Program, which was to use surplus federal land to build homes for the poor, was given a major White House send-off in 1967—and by 1971 had only 300 units of housing under construction.

Second, there were two specific areas in which important constituencies felt that the federal government was indeed moving in on them. The antisegregation laws—and court opinions—attacked deeply entrenched customs and were viewed as unwarranted interference by many Southern racists. When Nixon talked of Washington doing "too much," the Dixiecrats, to whom the Southern strategy was designed to appeal, did not have to consult the Budget or the Brookings Institution to know what he meant.

The question of school segregation and busing, however, went beyond the issues of public accommodations and voting rights. For one thing, this problem was posed in the *de facto* segregated districts of the North as well as in the *de jure* systems of the South. For another, it involved, as difficult cases almost always do, a conflict of rights rather than a right versus a wrong, as in the case of discriminatory voting and accommodation statutes. If minority demands for quality education through integration were, and should have been, the dominant consideration, still, ethnic and class concerns for the integrity of neighborhoods were not simply a mask for racism, they derived from an authentic emotion.

Moreover, the sweeping orders sometimes handed down in these cases came from the courts, i.e., from the least representative, most insulated of democratic institutions. The reason for that unfortunate—but to my mind, necessary—reality runs counter to neoconservative theory. If the executive and legislative branches, with their attendant planners and technocrats, had intervened vigorously on this count, the courts would not have acted. It was precisely the default of federal action, not its ubiquity, which turned the judiciary into an agency for the redress of long-overdue grievances.

Also, had there been a serious housing program in the sixties, with new cities and towns and new towns in towns, it could have furnished the basis for neighborhood and city-wide integration. But because the urban struggle became more and more of a battle between have-nots among the minorities and the poor and have-littles from the white working class, with the prize coming to be scarce resources such as schools and housing, the courts were called in as arbiters. Here, as in so many recent events, it was the lack of a radical program, the absence of innovation, that was crucial, not, as the neoconservatives have it, our prodigality.

So the evidence does not back up the first count of the neoconservative indictment of the welfare state in the sixties: that it did too much.

IN A WAY, the second count is a refinement of the first. It asserts that

• *The government was too egalitarian in its policies.* Thus, Nathan Glazer writes of "the revolution of equality": "Perhaps only a Tocqueville saw its awesome potency. For

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it not only expresses a demand for equality in political rights and in political power; it also represents a demand for equality in economic power, in social status, in authority in every sphere." Leaving for later the issue of the democratization of authority, what Glazer is doing is calling into question the traditional socialist demand for economic and social democracy. That is, of course, his civil liberty, but it puts him on the side of the status quo.

Second, there is no question that some movements in the sixties stood for the kind of radical, egalitarian redistribution of wealth and power that Glazer distrusts. But if one is not to be mesmerized by rhetoric it must be quickly added that *the egalitarians lost.* There is no factual basis whatever for the assertion that there was a massive trend toward equality in the sixties, particularly in income and status. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt to argue the contrary is to be found in Daniel Bell's *Public Interest* article, "Meritocracy and Equality" (Fall 1972); I will make a fairly close reading of some of its assertions since they are a perfect illustration of the way the sixties are read by neoconservatism.

Bell writes, " . . . the university, which once merely reflected the status system of the society, has now become the arbiter of class position. As the gate-keeper, it has gained a quasi-monopoly in determining the future stratification of society." And,

> Any institution which gains a quasi-monopoly over the fate of individuals is likely, in a free society, to be subject to quick attack. Thus, the Populist revolt which Michael Young foresaw several decades hence has already begun at the very outset of the post-industrial society.
>
> One sees this today in the derogation of the IQ and the denunciation of theories espousing a genetic basis of intelligence; in the demand for "open admissions" to universities; in the pressure for increased numbers of blacks, women and specific minority groups such as Puerto Ricans and Chicanos on the faculties of universities, by quotas if necessary; and in the attack on "credentials," and even schooling itself as the determinant of a man's position in society.

Is it true that the university "has now become the quasi-arbiter of class position"? That it has a "quasi-monopoly over the fate of individuals"? That "schooling itself" has ever been the "determinant of a man's position in society"?

That is most questionable sociology. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Frederick Mosteller summarize the Coleman Report (the Equal Educational Opportunity Report): ". . . studies do *not* find adult social achievement well predicted by academic achievement" and "family background, measured in social class terms—primarily education of parents, but including many other considerations such as the presence of an encyclopedia in the house—is apparently a major determinant of educational achievement." This latter assertion, it should be noted, inverts Bell's cause and effect, making educational achievement a function of class position rather than the other way round. Christopher Jencks's study of inequality (which Bell cites in his essay) came to an even more pointed conclusion as to the lack of relationship between scholarly and economic success. And David K. Cohen reported in the April 1972 *Commentary* that high school seniors in the bottom fifth both economically and in terms of IQ had a 10 percent chance of going to college—while seniors who were in the top income fifth and the bottom IQ fifth had a 40 percent chance.

These figures hardly confirm the thesis that we are on the verge of Michael Young's meritocracy where IQ is the decisive determinant of class position. Rather they back up Cohen's statement that "nowhere can we find any empirical support for the idea that brains are becoming increasingly more important to status in America." So Bell's basic assertion of a trend is, to put it mildly, quite debatable. Equality of opportunity, Bell

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writes (and there is more than a hint of nostalgia in his tone),

> derives from a fundamental principle of classical liberalism that the individual—and not the family, the community or the state—is the basic unit of society, and that the purpose of social arrangements is to allow the individual the freedom to fullfill his own purposes—by his labor to gain property, by exchange to satisfy wants, by upward mobility to achieve a place commensurate with his talents.

Counterposed to this approach is the current idea of equality of result: "Today we have come to the end of classic liberalism. It is not individual satisfaction which is the measure of social good, but redress for the disadvantaged as a prior claim on the social conscience and on social policies." This theory of equality of opportunity is, Bell says, a socialist ethic.

It should be said in passing that classical liberalism was, in some part, a swindle. If it helped liberate men from feudal relationships of personal dependence, the "individual" of whom it spoke was mostly the bourgeois, the affluent, the privileged individual. For him, the system worked; for the majority it did not, and one reason classical liberalism has faded is that people came to see its limitations.

But is it indeed true that "today . . . it is not individual satisfaction which is the measure of social good, but redress for the disadvantaged as a prior claim on the social conscience and social policies"? In part, Bell is here talking about theories, like John Rawls's writings on equality; but in part, he is making assertions about current practice. Witness his remark, "the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations had made equality the central theme of social policy." Is that true?

AGAIN, the sixties sometimes talked as if moved by egalitarian passions. Ironically, Moynihan himself might plausibly claim some credit—or, would he now himself bear some blame?—for introducing the idea of equality of result into the mainstream of political debate. In Moynihan's report on the Negro family in 1965 he wrote of a new period beginning after the victories over juridical segregation. Now, Moynihan said,

> the expectations of the Negro Americans will go beyond civil rights. Being American, they will now expect that in the near future equal opportunity for them as a group will produce roughly equal results, as compared with other groups. This is not going to happen. Nor will it happen for generations to come unless a new and special effort is made.

In Lyndon Johnson's Howard University speech, inspired and partly composed by Moynihan, the President said, "We seek not just freedom but opportunity, not just legal equality but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and a result."

As a statement of moral obligation toward people who have suffered discrimination for centuries, this argument seems quite compelling. As a political tactic, I have the same criticisms Moynihan eventually formulated: that programs to deal with the special needs of blacks and other minorities must also be designed so as to raise the living standards of others, the white working class in particular. Real full employment, for example, betters the bargaining position of all workers, but it aids the relative position of the most vulnerable more than that of any other group.

But if the sixties sometimes spoke—and rightly so—of national obligations to the victims of discrimination who are not dreamed of in the philosophy of classical liberalism, it did not act radically on that premise. Whatever one might think of the philosophic questions,[3] the welfare state in the last decade

[3] Bell refers to "equality of result" as a socialist ethic. Since the most famous discussion of the equality issue in the history of socialist thought—Marx's brief but profound comments on the Gotha Program of the German Social Democracy—is an *attack* on the notion that equality of result is a socialist ideal, this is a surprising assertion from one as well-versed as Bell in the literature. The socialist aim, at least in its serious formulations,

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was anything but egalitarian. Big business was encouraged, and sometimes paid, to become an "equal opportunity employer." Colleges dramatically increased the number of minority students. The best placed blacks made significant gains, i.e., the young educated Negroes with stable marriages were able to take advantage of the new opportunities.

This progress was not negligible. Yet neither does it justify Bell's sweeping generalization: "A sticky fact of Western society over the past 200 years has been the steady decrease in income disparity among persons —not by distribution policies and judgments about fairness, but by technology, which has cheapened the cost of products and made more things available to more people." This presumed trend is then made the basis of what Bell calls the "Tocqueville effect," an explanation of the ingratitude of the new Populists who recently benefited from the progress toward equality.

For according to Tocqueville, Bell says, democratic institutions and equality "develop sentiments of envy in the human heart." So, paradoxically, it is our more and more egalitarian reality, in Bell's view, which is the cause of "excessive" egalitarianism.

A few general words about Bell's "sticky fact" are needed before turning to specifics in the sixties. The extent to which there has been a *relative* change in income shares over the past 200 years in the West is difficult to document and certainly open to debate. There has, of course, been an absolute increase in the standard of living of the masses, but that is something else again and not relevant to Bell's assertion's about "disparities." Second, to the degree that some relative progress may have been achieved, it was the result not only of technology but also of a furious social conflict—a class war—over the distribution of the fruits of technology.

However, once one reduces the focus from two centuries to two decades—that is, to the period in which Bell perceives his "Tocqueville effect"—we can be somewhat more precise about the figures (but only somewhat; the dirty little secret of the rich in a democracy is the extent of their wealth). All the evidence shows that there has been no change in basic income distribution since at least 1947 (there are those who argue that there were some changes between 1929 and 1947 because of the Depression and the War—two rather unfortunate instruments of social policy—but even that proposition has been criticized by serious analysts).

Lewis Mandell of the University of Michigan Survey Research Center has computed that the top 5 percent of the wealth holders in America own 40 percent of the wealth, and that the top 20 percent possess three times as much as the 80 percent below them. A 1972 *Business Week* summary of recent research pointed out that the bottom 50 percent of the income recipients received 23 percent of total personal income in 1969 and represented only 3 percent of net worth. And James D. Smith of Penn State has concluded that the rich get richer because they start from a higher base. In stock ownership, as Letitia Upton and Nancy Lyons have documented, the disparities are severe: the top 1 percent of the wealth holders own 62 percent of all publicly held corporate stock; the top 5 percent have 86 percent, the top 20 percent have 97 percent. So much for our stockholder democracy.

These tendencies, it must be remembered, were reinforced, not reversed, by the Kennedy-Johnson administrations of the sixties (and, of course, by the Nixon administration). Because John Kennedy had such a narrow presidential margin and a shaky position in Congress, he moved to stimulate the

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has never been the impossible goal of guaranteeing everyone the right to win in a competitive rat race; it has been to abolish the rat race altogether. The formula, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need," insists upon, and even glories in, human differences—inequalities, if you will—once they no longer rationalize a system of invidious competition. Socialists want to move toward equality, in order then to transcend it.

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economy through investment credits, accelerated depreciation and tax cuts, all of which notoriously benefited the rich more than anyone else. During the sixties, as the AFL–CIO has documented on many occasions, unit labor costs were stable for the first half of the decade while profits soared (and also the much more significant figure of corporate cash flow, profit, plus depreciation allowances and internal financing). During the second half of the decade, workers were forced to strike simply to keep pace with the cost of living and some of them suffered a decline in real purchasing power. The UAW's bitter battle with GM in 1970, for instance, was in considerable measure necessary because the union had to catch up with inflation, running furiously just to stay in place.

Indeed, the staff studies and hearings of the Joint Economic Committee in 1972 showed that the Internal Revenue Code alone contains a welfare system, primarily for the rich, worth $77 billion a year (it takes the form of deductions for capital gains, mansions, etc.). The government—under Kennedy and Johnson as well as Nixon—used its power to favor corporate investment in machines even at times of high unemployment. Lyndon Johnson refused to fund the public-service jobs advocated by the Automation Commission of 1966 and the Civil Disorders Commission of 1968. Instead, he paid private business a bonus for hiring hard-core unemployed workers.

Even those increases in Social Security which formed the bulk of new government expenditures in the sixties contributed somewhat to this antiegalitarian trend. For as the Social Security tax, one of the most regressive in the nation, was increased, so was the burden on working people. (The Social Security tax does not vary according to family size, responsibilities, etc; and it is only charged against the first $12,500 of income, which makes it a bargain for those with over $12,500 a year and regressive compared even to the federal income tax.)

So the notion that our troubles are caused by the egalitarianism of the welfare state in the sixties, as suggested by both Glazer and Bell, is not true. Instead of talking of a "Tocqueville effect," perhaps it is necessary to speak of the "Sisyphus effect": the anger felt by people when they intuit that, despite the fact that they have more money to spend, they have not advanced their relative position in a society which regards that as the supreme good.

III

The neoconservative error in this regard constitutes the faulty basis for yet another proposition: since the Kennedy-Johnson years were excessively idealistic and egalitarian but still promoted discontent, this shows that

- *The consequences of government intervention are, more often than not, unintended and usually negative.* This proposition is central to the new conservatism and it will be examined in some detail.

The philosophy behind this theory goes back at least to Edmund Burke and his assertion of an organic development of society as an argument against state interference with the providence of the natural order of things. Perhaps the best known contemporary writer in this intellectual tradition is Michael Oakeshott. In his *Politics of a Guaranteed Income,* Moynihan cites Oakeshott in the course of analyzing the dispute over the Family Assistance Plan, saying that he "has defined the conservative temperament in terms which showed with great distinctiveness, and not a little advantage, in the debate. . . ." In Oakeshott's view, innovation involves "certain loss and possible gain" and is best when it resembles the process of growth. Oakeshott concludes that "as the conservative understands it, modifications of the rules should always reflect, and never impose, a change in the activities and beliefs of those who are subject to them." (On this calculus, much cited by the Dixiecrats

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at the time, the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 were clearly unwise.)

The now-famous "notch" is invoked by the American neoconservatives as an instance of Oakeshott's wisdom. The "notch" defines that point at which working, or increasing income, or even escaping from poverty becomes irrational because government policy turns a marginal increment into a substantial loss. Under the provisions of Aid for the Families of Dependent Children (Unemployed)—AFDC(U)—states were given the right to provide AFDC benefits even though there was an able-bodied, though unemployed, man in the house. However, if the man worked more than 30 or 35 hours, he and his family would lose all assistance. Similarly, in states with decent Medicaid programs, a person who raises his income by five dollars but thereby fails the means test for Medicaid, forfeits much more than five dollars in medical benefits. There is, consequently, a positive incentive to stay under the "notch," i.e, to remain, or at least appear to remain, poor.

These cases do meet Oakeshott's criteria for unintended consequences, since they are the result of good, reformist intentions. The AFDC(U) legislation was a victory for those liberals who were aghast because the requirement that no man could be in the house literally drove fathers to leave their families (or to pretend that they had done so). And Medicaid was, of course, a sleeper provision of the Medicare law which permitted the most advanced states—notably New York, Massachusetts, and California—to provide a partial installment of socialized medicine. Yet both of these efforts, laudable as their intent was, tended to provide inducements to poverty.

There can be no doubt that this "notch" effect took place. But does this prove, as Oakeshott, Moynihan, and the neoconservatives assume, that such mishaps are inherent in the very process of reform and therefore are an argument for caution with regard to innovation? That would be true only if other factors did not contribute to the "notch" effect—which is precisely the case. The "notch" was the creation of timid governmental action, not of sweeping programs.

First of all, it must be emphasized that both AFDC(U) and Medicaid were palliatives, not radical departures. AFDC(U) recognized that the government's full-employment policy was unable to provide work for a significant number of able and willing family heads. It was extremely limited in its application, required the states to act—and spend money—and therefore only operated in a significant fashion in a few areas. Had there been genuine full employment—through the mechanism of a federal guaranteed right to work—AFDC(U) would have been unnecessary. The "notch" in this case was therefore the result of an inadequate response to a problem that should not have been allowed to exist in the first place.

Similarly with Medicaid. The reason the "notch" arises in this area is that National Health Insurance, first vigorously advocated by Harry Truman in 1949, was rejected and the nation decided, after wasting more than a decade in indecision, on a second best: some medical care for the elderly; a states-rights Medicaid provision that was practically smuggled into the law. It is a notorious fact that Medicare and Medicaid have, along with their undeniable accomplishments, bid up the cost of medical care for those under 65 and not poor. This provides an enormous incentive for someone to keep his income below the Medicaid cut-off line. But if there were National Health Insurance—had we passed Truman's 1949 proposal or were we to pass the Kennedy-Griffith bill now before the Congress—the "notch" would simply disappear. So it is not the result of the immemorial frailties of the human condition, but of our own conscious, perverse, and reversible political decisions.

In saying these things, I do not want to suggest for a moment that reform is a seam-

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less, utterly predictable affair. Of course it isn't. Admitting that is one thing; overgeneralizing from it, as the neoconservatives have done, is another thing.

There is, however, one area where the complexities do more nearly accord to the neoconservative account of them: education. The Coleman Report—the Equal Educational Opportunity Survey and Report—is prime evidence in this regard. As Moynihan tells it, everyone assumed prior to the Report that an increase in educational inputs—money for schools, teachers, books, equipment, etc.—would result in better outputs: academic achievement. Therefore, it was said, particularly after the 1954 Supreme Court decision against segregation in public education, that the disparity in intellectual performance between the poor and the nonpoor, or the minorities and the majority, was to be explained by the lack of school inputs in poor neighborhoods. And this was the rationale of the various federal education programs of the sixties: they were to close the academic gap by channeling new resources to those who had suffered discrimination and neglect.

Some of these propositions were indeed shared by almost all liberals and radicals. To the extent that the Coleman Report disproved them—and the Report itself, it must be understood, is still the subject of debate—it did indeed expose an area of well-meaning ignorance. The Report did show that the objective disparities between black and white educational inputs were not as great has had been imagined by many; and that the academic outputs which could be won by money were lower than most had thought.

But Moynihan and company exaggerate the degree to which the assumptions subverted by Coleman had been shared by the Left. The belief that schools could—apart from changes in class position, the labor market, housing, etc.—transform life at the bottom of the society is not a radical thesis. Indeed, it does not even represent the best of liberalism. Coleman's findings, that family background measured in social-class terms is a more important determinant of educational achievement than school buildings or chemistry labs, confirms a traditional socialist analysis.

Second, thinking in terms of input and output assumes that education can, and should be, described as a production function appropriate in a factory: X dollars invested yields Y increases in reading scores. That equation, however, utterly fails to take into account some of the most crucial variables. The schools do not simply develop cognitive skills; they are also a basic socializing institution for a democratic society. If such a formulation strikes one as sentimental, a nonquantifiable claim, then it can be translated into economic projections. For there are serious experts who believe that it is not so much what a child learns in school, but the school experience taken as a whole, which is crucial for increasing intellectual productivity.

Third, part of our inability to deal with education relates to unprecedented changes that have taken place. Just before World War II, about a third of American youth went to high school. Now that figure is around three quarters of the available population. A generation ago, grade schools functioned to provide minimal literacy, and high schools were the preserve of the more fortunate and motivated students. Now there is a massive group in the high schools such as never existed before and one of the reasons that "Johnny" is not doing better is that this is the first time he has been asked to go beyond that basic literacy. We have most certainly failed to respond adequately to this challenge but our difficulties stem from a new and worthy problem.

Still, I would distinguish between two areas of unintended consequences in the recent history of the welfare state. First, there are the cases where our deficiencies are the result of timid, pinch-penny programs, which create unnecessary "notches." Second, there are areas—education, and drug addiction,

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for instance—in which our ignorance plays a role and our good intentions may sometimes be counterproductive. But the first category is a refutation of the Oakeshott analysis, and the second by no means confirms it. Nevertheless, the neoconservatives build upon this faulty base and argue against a "service strategy" that is seen as an unwarranted intervention in the domain of social complexity. They have persuaded the Nixon policy-makers on this count, providing them with a rationale for dismantling a number of Great Society programs—though they failed to win Nixon to a serious fight for the alternative of an income strategy.

IV

The critique of the service strategy was basic to Nathan Glazer's enormously influential article, "The Limits of Social Policy" (*Commentary,* September 1971). Glazer wrote: "In its efforts to deal with the breakdown of these traditional structures [family, ethnic group, church, neighborhood], however, social policy tends to encourage their further weakening." Services become professionalized; our lack of knowledge creates new problems rather than solutions. So, Glazer concluded, one of the things to recommend the Nixon Family Assistance Plan (FAP) is that it is not a service strategy. And in a later article Glazer praised another program based on an "income strategy": "Thus we know enough generally about Social Security to act (although there are plenty of complexities in that program, too). The same amount of money is sent out from a central point to everyone in the same status. The program's objectives are clear and simple, and thus it is easy to evaluate."

Moynihan carried the attack against the service strategy into the White House itself in 1969 and 1970, persuading—if only briefly—Richard Nixon to advocate a guaranteed annual income (which the President constantly asserted was not a guaranteed annual income). "The service strategy," Moynihan wrote in his retrospect on the battle for FAP, "has been quintessentially that of political liberalism in the middle third of the twentieth century. And yet the actual *effect* of service programs such as education is probably to reallocate resources *up* the social scale, taxing, as it were, factory workers to pay schoolteachers." An income strategy, Moynihan said, did not involve the intrusions and confrontations of a service strategy. And, he added in a somewhat radical mood, "The concept of an 'income strategy' entailed many risks—it could only in the end mean *income redistribution.* . . ."

This analysis contains both an interpretation of the recent history of the welfare state and policy conclusions to be derived from it. Moreover, it is typical of a strand of thought that is to be found in almost all of neoconservative writing. So it deserves rather careful attention.

First, it is *not* true that the service strategy has been "quintessentially that of political liberalism in the middle third of the twentieth century"—nor even in the decade of the sixties. There were probably some social workers who believed in such an approach, but they were relatively few in number and certainly not the arbiters of liberalism. The traditional New Deal liberals of the labor-liberal coalition always made full employment their demand, as Moynihan must remember from his days at the Department of Labor. A. Philip Randolph's Freedom Budget, which was endorsed by John Kenneth Galbraith as well as by a good number of international union presidents, put this issue at the very heart of government policy.

It is true that in the original infighting over the Economic Opportunity Act, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (through Wilbur Cohen) and the Council of Economic Advisers (through Walter Heller) battled the Secretary of Labor (Willard Wirtz) and his associate (Moynihan) on this question. Cohen, Heller, and their allies wanted to make the war on poverty into a

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community action program; Moynihan and Wirtz were for a job emphasis. But even then, the community action proponents never isolated that idea from the whole range of macroeconomic measures in which the government was engaging. Heller, as the chief architect of what was then called the "New Economics," could have hardly thought that services were "quintessential."

I do not cite this history merely to demonstrate that Moynihan's memory is faulty. It relates to establishing the broader context of all the welfare state debates of the sixties. The Kennedy-Johnson manpower policies did reduce joblessness from the Eisenhower levels down to less than 4 percent, and that was probably the most effective single accomplishment in the "war" on poverty. But in 1966 and 1968 when, as I have already noted, presidential commissions recommended a ranging federal program of funding public-service employment, Lyndon Johnson turned down that liberal proposal and took the conservative ("trickle-down") line of encouraging private hiring by subsidizing it. In this case, the realistic politicians were wrong, the liberal intellectuals right.

It is precisely Moynihan's amnesia on this count which flaws his analysis of the Family Assistance Plan. In explaining why the Nixon proposals set the minimum so low (in the neighborhood of $2,500 for a family), Moynihan says that this was necessary because the working poor were being included in the program. Since they were to be given the right to keep a portion of the earnings (in contrast to the 100 percent tax on such income in most welfare systems), a $2,500 base for the dependent (nonworking) poor thus meant some support to the working poor up to $5,000 of income. If, therefore, the minimum were set at $6,500, as urged by Senator Eugene McCarthy and the National Welfare Rights Organization, that would have required supplementing the income of everyone with less than $13,000, i.e., of the majority of the people So, Moynihan concludes, it was essential to peg the minimum low if there was any hope of passing the plan.

In other words, the undeniable needs of the working poor, who would gain from FAP, were counterposed to the undeniable needs of the dependent poor in states with relatively high benefits. The latter would not get any increases at all—they might even lose in the shuffle. But this was true only because of an enormous and intolerable fact which Moynihan ignores: that there were unconscionably high levels of unemployment and underemployment creating that scandalous category of the "working poor." If the Nixon administration, in which Moynihan served, had not systematically increased unemployment as part of a strategy for price stability in 1969 and 1970, the problem would have been much less difficult. If the liberal proposals for full employment had been adopted in the sixties, it would not have existed at all.

Second, there is Moynihan's assertion that the service strategy reallocates resources *"up* the social scale." That depends, not on the nature of the service strategy, but on the tax system. If, for example, one were to finance community action programs in the next period out of those $20 billion in loophole savings that would be realized if the reforms advocated by George McGovern and George Meany were adopted, Moynihan's regressive effect would not take place. It is true that in the sixties the burden of paying for social services—and for the war in Vietnam—fell discriminatorily upon working people. That, however, was a function of the antiegalitarianism of federal wealth and income policy, which has already been documented in the discussion of Daniel Bell's view on equality.

Similarly, Moynihan's assertion that FAP had to mean *"income redistribution"*—and it is interesting that, as a neoconservative, he counts this as a point in its favor—is, in and of itself, not true in the least. If FAP were accompanied by a tough tax-reform proposal, that might have been the case; and it was debated at a time when Nixon,

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as the Joint Economic Committee showed, was increasing the tax relief of the rich substantially. (He reduced taxes by about $20 billion a year.)

Third, Moynihan is somewhat ambiguous —and somewhat wrong—in another aspect of his critique of the service strategy. In the introduction he wrote (along with Frederick Mosteller) to the essays on the Coleman Report, which were produced by a Harvard seminar, he said,

> One of the patterns of the 1960s was that of middle-class persons, in large measure professionals, conceiving a great range of social programs, supported by tax monies, which undertook to assist the poor through a process of employing middle-class persons. Reform was becoming professionalized.

In this formulation, Moynihan seems to be giving sophisticated utterance to a popular myth: that welfare programs are a cheat designed by social workers. In the process, he overstates the class bias of the service strategy. Nathan Glazer is much closer to the truth when he writes,

> . . . we hired great numbers of social workers and consultants, increasing their income. Many of these—few at the beginning, more later—came from minority groups; we were providing the jobs through these programs for the barely college trained that other programs were producing; and from the same communities.

In the case of teachers, whom Moynihan has attacked on this count, my own guess is that a very large number of them are the children of working-class families.

But then Moynihan himself is ambiguous in his critique. In the same essay in which he deprecated the middle-class beneficiaries who allegedly profiteer from poverty programs, he also wrote, "Increasingly the most relevant findings concerning the state of society are the work of elites and must simply be taken—or respected—by the public at large, at times even by the professional public involved, on. . . faith." Social reality, Moynihan argues in this mood, is often "counter-intuitive" and therefore the society must accept the data from the experts. So Moynihan is,—as is Bell, who is at least as anxious to defend the perquisites of expertise—of two minds about the professionals in charge of the service strategy.

In this, as in the entire critique of the service strategy, there is the imprecision of overgeneralizations. In a good many cases, the flaws which are said to be inherent in such programs turn out, on closer examination, to be the result of the limitations—usually the cheapness—of the welfare state itself. President Nixon did not, however, bother to make such discriminations. He allowed himself to be persuaded, or perhaps it would be more precise to say that he permitted his prejudices to be reinforced, by the blunderbuss blast against the service strategy. And after a brief infatuation with Family Assistance, he abandoned the income strategy, too.

V

The neoconservatives cannot, of course, be held responsible for a reactionary misreading of their views. But they should be aware of how their philosophy disposes itself to such a fate. This is particularly true of their largest, and most conservative, abstraction:

• *The preference for the unplanned, and even the irrational, as opposed to conscious government policy.* This is a fundamental conservative theme, the nostalgia for the vanished *Gemeinschaft,* the suspicion of the contemporary *Gesellschaft.* From Burke to Dostoevsky to Spengler it has been at the very center of conservative thought.

In the early pages of *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding,* Moynihan indulges in some romantic medievalism which leans heavily upon Robert Nisbet. But then, Moynihan is partly a product of Catholic social thought, which has always idealized

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the period of the Church's dominance. In the writings of Chesterton, Belloc, Gill, and others, the Middle Ages were held up as a model. But it is Nathan Glazer, sharing Moynihan's outlook yet coming from a completely different (socialist) tradition, who provides the most interesting example of this mood.

"Social policy"—Glazer wrote in "The Limits of Social Policy"—"is an effort to deal with the breakdown of traditional ways of handling disasters." What the family, church, ethnic group, *Landsmanschaft,* etc. once did, the government now attempts to do. "In the effort to deal with the breakdown of these traditional structures, however, social policy tends to encourage their further weakening." Putting it that way is to confuse the effect for a cause and to overlook a revolution. The "traditional way of handling disasters" broke down, in good measure, because of unprecedented new problems and disasters. By focusing on the breakdown as the author of our woes, one holds out the hope that all can be well again if only it can be repaired; by stressing the cause of the breakdown, a revolutionary process that has been going on for some centuries, one knows that the revival of the old *Gemeinschaft* is impossible.

Glazer believes that Humpty Dumpty is going to be put together again: ". . . some important part of the solution to our social problems lies in the traditional practices and restraints." But when the economic and social conditions for those practices and restraints have been destroyed, how can they rise from the dead to solve our problems?

I suspect that Glazer's emphasis derives in part from a very real and understandable concern about the breakdown of "traditional practices and traditional restraints" in his own neighborhood: the university. So it is that the climactic charge in Glazer's indictment of the "revolution of equality" is that it seeks to create "equality in authority." And Daniel Bell defends the "authority represented in the superior competence of individuals" from the scorn of the New Populists.

In part, these neoconservative fears have substantial content. There has indeed been a decline of ethical standards accompanying the effective collapse of organized religion. The emancipation of the psyche from the restraints imposed upon it by the hierarchical authority of the past has not, as Marx and the socialist tradition hoped, led to the emergence of a new, humanist and rational code. For one thing, this cultural revolution has occurred, not within the context of a political and social revolution, but under the domination of conservative social structures. As a result, the revolution was marketed, vulgarized, co-opted. There are, then, reasons to be disturbed. But this upheaval has been going on for perhaps a century, and it is hardly the result of recent—Populist or New Left—trends in American life. Moreover, if there is any possibility that this cultural revolution can become a vehicle for social emancipation, what is required is a radical response, a reshaping of the social structures, and not, as in the neoconservative proposal, a retreat.

On a more prosaic level, Glazer deduces some very faulty policy from his attempt to revive *Gemeinschaft* past. He writes: "Ultimately, we are not kept healthy, I believe, by new scientific knowledge or more effective cures or even better-organized medical care services. We are kept healthy by certain patterns of life." That, I submit, is not true. England and Sweden are beset by the same cultural convulsions as the United States. Their churches, family structure, etc. are no more secure than ours. Yet their health is. The reason is simple enough: they have better-organized medical care than we do.

In some ways, this celebration of the organic as against the rational is the most unfortunate aspect of neoconservatism. It takes that fledgling ideology back toward conservatism pure and simple, to the notion that the hope of the future lies in the past.

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VI

This critique of neoconservatism can now be generalized: the failures of the welfare state in recent years are the result of its conservatism, not its excessive liberalism or, more preposterously, of its radicalism.

There has, of course, been a counterprogram implicit, and sometimes explicit, in my analysis of the neoconservatives. I propose to sketch it out in symbolic detail, i.e., not to offer a legislative shopping list, but to illustrate an emphasis, to exemplify an approach to a program rather than the program itself. In order to do that, I will first summarize the critique of the welfare state that is the point of departure for my strategy. There are the inherent limitations of this social formation itself, which are to be found in all of the advanced capitalist powers; and the special limitations of the most conservative and pinchpenny welfare state in the world, the United States of America.

Some General Propositions

• *1. All welfare states are antiegalitarian and resist income redistribution.*

Sophisticated businessmen, the decisive though not always dominant class of welfare-state society, have learned that a Keynesian government following corporate priorities is their friend, not their enemy. They have also accepted the establishment of social minimums of income, health care, etc. They came screaming to this wisdom because they were educated in it by militant labor, socialist, and liberal movements. And they did so with all the grace exhibited by the English industrialists who, as Marx said, accepted restrictions upon the working hours of factory labor for the same reason that they spread guano on their fields: because they did not want to exhaust a productive resource.

But even though the ruling class can thus be driven and cajoled into a modicum of decency, it refuses to allow the welfare state to change the *relative shares* of wealth. So it is that Richard Titmuss has documented the sharp limits of redistribution even under a Labour government in England and that the figures for the United States show that there has been no shift in the *portions* allotted to the different social classes in at least a generation. Even in Sweden, where a social democratic government has created one of the most imaginative and progressive welfare states in the world, there was tremendous resistance when Olaf Palme fought for a very modest redistribution several years ago. Significantly, the opposition came not from the blue-collar working class, which was willing to make concessions to better the lot of the worst-off in the society, but from the educated salariat.

The reason for this persistence of the maldistribution of wealth are not to be found, as Irving Kristol argued in his essay "About Equality," in a bell-shaped distribution of human talents which determines a bell-shaped distribution of rewards. For one thing, Kristol was simply, and shockingly, wrong on the facts: the distribution of rewards in America is not bell-shaped at all but skewed outrageously in favor of the rich. For another, as some of the data already cited indicate, the influence of class subverts, or at least vitiates, much of the effect of genetic endowment.

The persistence of maldistribution results from the concentration of "creative" wealth in the hands of a tiny minority. *The top 5 percent of income recipients who own 86 percent of all publicly held corporate stock receive greater increments of the governmentally planned and induced growth in national product than does any other group.* Precisely to the degree that state management of the economy is successful, Harold Wilson noted in 1960, there is "a law of increasing returns to the rich."

However, the powers-that-be do not trust simply in trends; they help them along. Welfare state governments constantly intervene on behalf of those whom the *Wall Street Journal* calls the "most productive" citizens,

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i.e., the possessors of wealth who often engage in no activity more strenuous than the clipping of coupons. David Lewis of the New Democratic party has documented the existence of "corporate welfare bums" in Canada who fatten themselves on the privileges that the government provides for them. Their similars can be found in every advanced capitalist nation. This reality, it must be emphasized, is not merely a concoction of conservatives when they take their turn at running the welfare state. It is sometimes encouraged by liberals as well. The Kennedy-Johnson tax cuts in the sixties gave enormous subsidies to the richest people and corporations in America. One result, as the AFL–CIO has stressed repeatedly, was a one-sided capital-goods boom initiated by government policy, which made significant contributions —along with the government's war in Vietnam—to the raging inflation at the decade's end.

These things do not happen because liberals in America, or social democrats in Europe, are insincere, sell-outs, or anything of the sort. Such explanations of social behavior almost always miss the mark. Much more profoundly, private wealth dominates the economy of the welfare state. Therefore, a government that seeks to maximize growth —and with it full employment, tax revenues to fund new social services, etc.—must keep corporations happy. If there is a strike of capital, as happened to Leon Blum in the France of the thirties and to Harold Wilson in the England of the sixties, the system will not work.

• *2. The welfare state does not simply tend to distribute rewards according to the priorities of private wealth and power; it also plans production according to the same anti-social calculus.*

The pre-World War I German socialists noted this trend under Bismarck. They called it "state socialism": the use of techniques such as nationalization, planning, and social services. During the heyday of French "indicative planning"—that conspiracy for economic growth between the state and the capitalists, as one critic called it—the companies were able to utilize what was, in effect, government-subsidized market research for their own ends; but the unions, even though seats were allocated to them in the planning bodies, did not have the resources to take advantage of the same information. In the process, the joint decisions of the state and the business community determine the shape, as well as the distribution, of the national product.

In the United States, as we have seen, the Kennedy-Johnson policies did not simply favor rich individuals. They also channeled private money into new investment at a time when there was still relatively high unemployment. Richard Nixon, who is straightforwardly reactionary in such matters, proposed to expand that contradiction with his "job development credit." In agriculture, federal subsidies have favored the big, corporate operation and helped to drive small farmers out of existence. In housing, policies determined in Washington—and corresponding to a calculus of private profitability rather than public need—encouraged suburbia with princely assistance while the central cities were allowed to rot. The very structure of the American economy, then, is becoming more and more the work of the hidden agenda that determines the priorities of federal policy and orients them toward the interests of big business.

This tendency, one can be assured, will assert itself in the current search for a solution to the energy crisis. The crisis itself is, of course, the result of government policies that were in the service of the 23 major petroleum producers. Quotas on imports, tax write-offs to domestic producers, and other federal actions led to a rapid consumption of continental reserves. Now Senator Henry Jackson has proposed a $20 billion research and development program, in which Washington is going to bail out the authors of our crisis. John Connally toured the Middle East as the

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unofficial representative of the President of the United States and the official lawyer for Texas (worldwide) oil interests. Connally then joined the Nixon staff, with special responsibilities for energy policy (the fact that he could not fit into the paranoid atmosphere of the post-Watergate White House does not alter the essential point).

If there are going to be billions spent on solar, geothermal, and tidal energy research, as now seems to be the case, and if the structure of our welfare state remains much as it is, then one can predict with certainty that the chief beneficiaries of the new, publicly developed technology will be the villains from the old, publicly subsidized technology. Washington, in short, socializes both production and distribution for private profit.

• *3. The welfare state is, by its very nature, a contradictory phenomenon.*

This is a crucial point to grasp, for it provides the opening for positive political action and keeps the foregoing analysis from leading to a weary fatalism.

On the one hand, the welfare state represents the interests, and the achievements, of the Left. It is a means of imposing nonmarket considerations upon a capitalist economy, of making the society somewhat more humane. Therefore the great mass movements for reform in all of the advanced capitalist countries seek to control the welfare state and to impose their, the people's, priorities upon it. Moreover, in periods of crisis and change, real gains have been, and can be, made. The New Deal, the Labour government in England after 1945, the Swedish accomplishment achieved from the thirties to the present, the legislative acts of the Popular Front in France, all represent a significant advance for working men and women and their middle-class allies.

On the other hand, the welfare state exists within a capitalist economy and, particularly in "normal" periods, it is permeated by the values of that society. There is consequently a built-in tendency to erode the progress made by the mass movements in times of militancy. Even so, the contradictions of the welfare state offer a point of departure for change—above all, for structural change. But before turning to that question, a few notes on its American model.

The American welfare state is the most conservative variant. It is the most narrow and pinchpenny, since this country spends a smaller percentage of its GNP on social programs than any advanced nation, capitalist or Communist. There are, for example, the scandalous absence of national health insurance, the routine toleration of levels of unemployment which would topple a government in most European countries, the failure to do anything serious about the housing of the poor over the past generation.

Also, the American welfare state is antisocialist, while all other welfare states have been profoundly influenced by socialist thought and action. This means, as John Kenneth Galbraith recognizes, that the United States tends to regard government undertakings as part of the area of unfreedom and inefficiency, a conviction that often operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy. It has been a major obstacle to the passage of national health insurance, and it will surely be used by the oil companies as an excuse for profiteering on the energy crisis. In this context, the fight for socialist legitimacy in this country is crucial to the process of liberal reform. For our antisocialism is really directed against improvement in the welfare state, not, alas, against a serious socialist threat within America.

And finally, there is the federal nature of American politics. This has meant that so many of our programs—welfare, unemployment insurance, Medicaid, to name a few—have been subjected to states' rights vetoes. The states which adopt policies based upon a modicum of humanity are penalized; the most reactionary areas advertise their callousness as an inducement for investment.

So the very phenomenon of the welfare state, as well as its American exemplar, is

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based upon a conservative power structure. In their reading of the sixties, one crucial error the neoconservatives make is that they ignore the hidden agenda which follows from these interrelationships of power. By taking official declarations at face value, they conjure up an egalitarian, innovating, semi-radical decade—which never existed. Moreover, even if it may sound a little arrogant, it should be remembered that this writer and DISSENT and others on the democratic Left were not taken in, that we predicted the intended consequences of the real American agenda.

VII

This analysis is not, however, simply a critique of the neoconservatives. It also obviously points the way to action. The strategy I propose would take advantage of every contradiction within the welfare state to win whatever gains are possible here and now. But it would also seek to transform structures, particularly the maldistribution of wealth and the use of governmental power to shape the national product according to private priorities. My ultimate aim is, *pace* Nathan Glazer, the democratization of economic power and the socialization of the private sector. For now, however, let me simply discuss a few important measures which are transitional in character, i.e., rooted in immediate and politically possible demands, yet capable of effecting some increments of change in the structure of power itself.

• *A guaranteed right to work.* The failures of most manpower programs in the sixties are not to be explained primarily by the difficulties of providing educational services, the unintended consequences of overly ambitious schemes, etc. They are, more than anything else, a function of the country's refusal to provide a decent job for every citizen. There are urgent needs for the human talents now being squandered in unemployment and underemployment, particularly in the nonprofit sector. The Emergency Employment Act of 1971 was much too narrow, underfinanced, temporary, etc. That is to say, it bore all the marks of President Nixon's effort to make it as inadequate as possible. Yet in some areas it did prove that Washington can act effectively to fund useful jobs. It now needs to be generalized, or rather turned into a fundamental principle of the society: that federally financed work will be provided, sometimes as a first resort and sometimes as a last resort, but always and automatically in the case of need, so that every employable worker has a job.

Such legislation would entail a certain danger of inflation by tightening up the labor market, a risk that is infinitely more acceptable than the reality of chronic joblessness since the passage of the Employment Act of 1946. In part, the inflationary effect will be offset by increased productivity—by the fact that unused human resources will be put to work producing valuable goods and services that people want, in housing, health, education, and the like. In part, an inflationary tendency must be recognized as an inherent, but manageable, problem in any full-employment economy (Joan Robinson says that Keynes himself understood this point a generation ago.) Therefore, on this count, as on many others, there must be an incomes policy.

• *Incomes policy* is an area in which the pessimistic analysis of this essay has been, alas, confirmed every time. In England, for instance, it was first proposed by the left wing of the Labour party as a means of redistributing wealth. However, the imperatives of the capitalist economy—above all the argument that profit income is a source of further growth and therefore performs more important services than wage income, which is merely consumed—overwhelmed that excellent intention. So it is that the Labour Left and the Trade Union Congress are now bitter opponents of any kind of incomes policy. And in the United States, the unions have a similar suspicion of—but not such an implacable hostility toward—an incomes

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policy. There is no alternative to an incomes policy if there is to be full employment with inflation under control. That, however, means a much greater invasion of "management prerogatives" than has as yet been undertaken. Price and investment and profit and dividend decisions must become a matter of public debate and determination. The Internal Revenue Code must be transformed from an instrument of negative redistribution, placing greater burdens on the working people than on the rich, to a means of positive redistribution. In particular, and here I simply restate an excellent principle introduced into the 1972 campaign by George McGovern, there should be a positive and systematic bias against all forms of unearned income: capital gains, dividends, interest, etc.

Even such a program is too cautious, in danger of being subverted by private economic power. Take the common corporate practice of concealing profit income. Big business already spends millions in order to conceal billions and, with an effective incomes policy, it would be motivated to become even more wily and evasive. In the 1973 Report of the Council of Economic Advisers, for instance, one reads of how the profit percentages of nonfinancial corporate monies dropped from 22.1 percent in 1950 to a mere 10.6 percent in 1971. The Council was lending a helpful scholarly hand to the companies who want to plead poor mouth. However the same table indicates that "capital consumption allowances" went from 5.7 percent to 10.7 percent. In 1972, those capital consumption allowances were worth $67.7 billion—compared with after-tax profits of $52.6 billion. These enormous increases in capital consumption allowances reflect the various credits and depreciation gimmicks of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. A good part of that $67.7 billion in 1972 represents hidden profits (when, for example, actual depreciation is not at all as rapid as the legal rate of accelerated depreciation, a point which Philip Stern, among others, has documented).

In short, the institutional prejudices of the tax system, of the legal system, and of the accounting profession lean toward the falsification of unearned income statistics and profit rates. So, in addition to changes in the tax code, there must be major transformations in the status of the corporation, all of them toward making it a more "transparent" and publicly accountable institution. Specifically, there should be both public and employee members on the board of directors of all major companies, with funds for expert assistance to aid them in representing the consumer and worker interest—and in systematically betraying management "secrets" as a matter of principle.

If there were a guaranteed right to work and an effective incomes policy, then there could be a realistic *Guaranteed Annual Income*. Almost all of the difficulties attendant upon Nixon's Family Assistance Plan would disappear if the context were thus dramatically altered. If the "working poor" were abolished as a category by the operation of a full-employment policy, then one could provide a decent minimum for the dependent poor who are not in the labor market. In doing this, one is not going to solve all the human problems which collect under the title of "welfare." The 300,000 black women and children added to the poverty figures in 1972, and the hundreds of thousands who had arrived there before them, are going to constitute a tragic, difficult challenge for some time to come. But at least we can put a federally established floor under misery.

• *Medical care* is another area in which it is not the limitations of our social intelligence but the perversity of our politics that stops us from action. The Kennedy-Griffith bill is not, alas, socialized medicine; it does not establish a single medical system in America, collectively paid for, with access determined soley by medical need and a maximum of individual choice for doctor

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and patient. But it is a gigantic step forward, with the great merit of substituting group and preventive medicine for fee-for-service medicine. It has been criticized by the keepers of liberal moderation, the Brookings Institution, as being too radical, which I regard as a substantial point in its favor. (Those Brookings analyses of the Budget are certainly invaluable, but not, as some liberals and editorialists seem to think, holy writ. They are written from the viewpoint of decent and humane Kennedy-Johnson liberals, which means that they are infinitely superior to the proposals from the Nixon administration—but also inadequate.)

• *Housing* is somewhat more problematic. The housing project is a genuine example of a liberal idea whose unintended consequences were more important than its good intentions. Moreover, we know from the experience of George Romney and the federal subsidy of rental and home ownership (the "234" and "235" programs) that the private market is not an answer, since it will, given the least opportunity, fleece both the public and the poor. We also know that the Joint Economic Committee has computed that the 1971 subsidies to private home ownership, disproportionately allocated to the wealthy and their mansions rather than the workers and their bungalows, were on the order of $12 billion.

New cities and new towns are possible. These have been built in Scandinavia, England, and, to cite the depressing American example, in Florida where Disney World utilizes some of the most innovating ideas in urban design for its profits. Why not do the same thing for social purposes throughout the United States?

IN ALL of this I do not claim access to some secret solution to all of our ills. But I do think that the evidence demonstrates that there are areas—most particularly, full employment, income tax reform, incomes policy, guaranteed income, medicine, and more problematically housing—where this country can act. In my analysis, and in the conclusions based upon it, there is a common assumption I share with the neoconservatives: that social reality is counterintuitive. They take this to mean that the organic complexities of this reality are such as to frustrate any government impious enough to intrude upon them. I take it to mean that the reality of society is expressed neither in its formal declarations, even when they are liberal, nor in some organic providence, but in a system of power that is man-made. They therefore look for the causes of the recent failures of the welfare state in the fundamental limitations of the human condition. I see them as a result of a hidden agenda which follows the priorities of private wealth. They therefore think that the revolution of these times will moderate itself if only we aspire less; I am convinced that the revolution is going to take place, willy-nilly, and that the only hope we have is to take control of it.

In this conflict, there is a disagreement over the welfare state. They take it as a given and largely ignore its influence upon the failures they decry. I regard it as a transitional social phenomenon, perched midway between the *laissez faire* past and the collectivist future. It could serve as the first step toward a society of authoritarian and corporate collectivism in which the Richard Nixons of this world would use the techniques that the Left initiated for the purposes of the Right; it might be a bridge toward a society in which people will actually control the state that directs the economy.

Insofar as the abstract and unhistorical view of the welfare state propounded by the neoconservatives persuades us to timidity and acquiescence, it is not preparing the way for the miraculous resurrection of *Gemeinschaft*. It is, for all the decency and intelligence of its proponents, unwittingly doing the work of the reactionaries who will have unchallenged dominance over the collectivism of the 21st century, if once the people are persuaded that they are impotent. □

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Murray Hausknecht

Caliban's Abode

PROSPERO: A devil, a born devil on whose unfortunate nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers . . .

The Tempest

Celebrated as the cradle of civilization, the source of civility, change, and progress, the city has also been damned as the locus of evil, and for many Sodom and Gomorrah are still the archetypal urban communities. These themes run together with traditional political ideologies: liberals and radicals are generally favorable and conservatives take the dim view.

Today the fit between the latter's ideology and reality seems better than ever. It is difficult to discover in modern American urban life those virtues cherished by conservatives; the contemporary city appears to justify their worst apprehensions about the long-term drift of a liberal society. This may account for the attraction urban ills have for the conservative: he contemplates them with the relish of a fundamentalist preacher gazing upon a sinner.

There is something of this in Edward Banfield's influential book *The Unheavenly City,*[1] which perhaps explains why some remnants of the New Left have demanded that it be banned in schools and universities. It is more likely, though, that these difficulties come from the nature of his arguments which in many ways reflect, from the opposite end of the political spectrum, the simplicities of the New Left. The book is about major American preoccupations: a walk through the city streets discloses poverty, deteriorated housing, crime, delinquency, segregation, addiction—the whole gamut of problems in what seem to be more concentrated forms than ever before. To the questions of why, and what can be done, Banfield provides clear answers that apparently flow from the best of modern social research. At a time when any answers, much less unequivocal ones, are in short supply, his analysis is likely to seem attractive and persuasive. But it also resonates, as we shall see, with some darker currents running through American consciousness that make his perspective additionally seductive.

In a previous work Banfield said of a Chicago official,

> His remarks about Puerto Ricans and Negroes also won him support from "reactionaries." Those remarks were misinterpreted of course—Rose himself was not prejudiced, and did not like those who were—but if he had seen fit to do so, he could have phrased what he had to say so that there would have been no possibility of misinterpretation.[2]

[1] Edward Banfield, *The Unheavenly City* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970). All quotations except if otherwise noted are from this book.

[2] *Political Influence* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1961), p. 66.

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Banfield, too, can and has been read as a "racist" by those who want him banned. But that does him an injustice and misses the real political import of his position. His "prejudice" is of a more fundamental kind than vulgar racism; his prejudgments concern the necessary structure of a human community.

Banfield's fundamental proposition about the city is that "its characteristic form and most of its problems" are the result of its population, particularly the lower-class population. "If the lower class were to disappear . . . the most serious and intractable problems of the city would disappear with it." Each class has a "distinctive psychological orientation," and that of the lower-class person involves an inability "to discipline oneself to sacrifice present for future gratifications" largely because of an inability "to imagine a future." A contrast with the upper class highlights some of the details.

An upper-class individual defines himself in relation to "the future of his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren" and is also concerned about the future of the "community, nation, or mankind." He is self-confident about his ability to shape the future through his own actions, and he realizes that this entails a sacrifice of present gratifications for future returns. He, therefore, inhibits any self-indulgent impulses toward sex or violence lest these damage his "provision for the future." Since he also believes in the value of "self-expression," his behavior may occasionally resemble that of lower-class persons, but "whereas the lower-class individual is capable *only* of present-oriented behavior, the upper-class one can choose." His positive evaluation of self-expression is probably linked to his tolerant, "perhaps even encouraging view of unconventional behavior in sex, the arts, and politics." At the same time he "deplores bigotry" and "abhors violence." He also possesses a strong sense of responsibility to the community and frequently decides to serve it.

At the opposite extreme stands the lower-class person "living from moment to moment." He is far from self-confident; his future is "fixed, fated, beyond his control: things happen to him." He is "radically improvident" and anything "he cannot consume immediately he considers valueless. . . . His bodily needs (especially for sex) . . . take precedence over everything else—certainly any work routines." His occupational career consists of a ceaseless drift from one unskilled job to another. He is bedeviled by "feelings of self-contempt" and is inclined to be "suspicious and hostile, aggressive yet dependent." He tends to remain unmarried and has no attachment to "community, neighbors, or friends . . . he belongs to no voluntary associations . . . and does not vote unless paid to do so." The lower-class man is constantly searching for "action" and this probably contributes to making "lower-class life extraordinarily violent." Banfield claims, however, that lower-class violence is better accounted for by the high incidence of mental illness rather than class subculture.

A significant portion of the lower class is black, but it is class rather than race that is important here. The problems of these people are not primarily those of racial prejudice, though it undeniably exists. What appears to blacks as racial prejudice is in reality "class prejudice or, at any rate, class antipathy . . . much of what appears to whites as 'Negro' behavior is really lower-class behavior." So, for example, the ghetto riots of the sixties were not "political" phenomena; rather, they were either "rampages . . . outbreak[s] of animal—usually gang, male animal—spirits" or "the foray for pillage . . . and here also boys and adults of the lower class are the principal offenders." In other words, wherever there are large concentrations of "boys and young men of the lower class," as there are in black neighborhoods, the necessary conditions for riots exist. It follows, then, that "it is naive to think that efforts to end racial injustice and eliminate poverty, slums, and unemployment will have any appreciable affect upon the amount of

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rioting that will be done in the next decade or two."

Banfield's stress on class subculture resembles the emphasis of the "culture of poverty" theorists. While not denying that such a culture exists, Banfield goes beyond it, so to speak:

> Extreme present-orientedness, not lack of income or wealth, is the principal cause of poverty in the sense of "the culture of poverty." Most of those caught up in this culture are unable or unwilling to plan for the future, or to sacrifice immediate gratifications in favor of future ones, or to accept the disciplines that are required in order to get and to spend. . . . Lower-class poverty is "inwardly" caused (by psychological inability to provide for the future and all that this inability implies).

In short, poverty is "the effect rather than the cause" of the culture of poverty.

On the other hand, it is not exactly clear what poverty is. If it means "destitution . . . lack of income sufficient to insure physical survival," then no one in the city is destitute. If poverty is defined as "want . . . lack of enough income to support 'essential welfare,' " there is very little of it in the city. Want involves a standard of "basic needs" and these

> do not change much from one generation to the next (if they do they are not basic!), neither does a culture's idea of what constitutes a "decent," worthy, respectable, etc., mode of life. Therefore want can be defined by a standard that changes so slowly as to be for all practical purposes fixed.

Banfield quotes a standard laid down by the economist Alfred Marshall in the 19th century and suggests that it can still serve today: " 'a well-drained dwelling with several rooms, warm clothing, with some changes of underclothing, pure water, a plentiful supply of cereal food, with a moderate allowance of meat and milk, and a little tea, etc. . . .' " By this standard there is little want. The poverty that people are so exercised about is really a matter of relative deprivation; that is, people *feel* poor, they suffer not from a "lack of income but from a lack of status." In theory it is possible to remedy this by such schemes as the negative income tax, but these schemes probably would not work since "the lower-class person prefers near destitution without work to abundance with it." Thus here, as with other problems such as unemployment, little can be done, though this does not mean that

> calamity impends. Powerful accidental (by which is meant, nongovernmental and, more generally, nonorganizational) forces are at work that tend to alleviate and even to eliminate the problems. . . . One powerful accidental force at work is economic growth.

Although the notion of class seems central to Banfield's analysis, in a very real sense he is not talking of class at all. Less paradoxically, Banfield's concept of class is quite different from what is commonly understood by it in most social and political analyses.

In contemporary usage class refers to the position of people relative to "the means of production" or similar "life chances"; that is, class refers to social fate as it is determined by the economy of the society. People commonly situated find ways of adapting to or coping with the exigencies of their situation and, therefore, a common economic fate gives rise to distinctive patterns of life or a "subculture."

Herbert Gans, one of Banfield's primary sources on class subcultures, notes that "Classes are strata-with-subcultures that grow out of the national economy and society." [3] The subcultures "are *responses* that people make to the *opportunities* and *deprivations* they encounter." [4] Classes, then, are not given by God or Nature; they emerge

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[3] *The Urban Villagers* (New York: Free Press, 1962), p. 24.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

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out of conflicts for control over property and political power. These conflicts produce systems of inequality that determine the kinds of lives men can lead. But the inequalities of today need not be the inequalities of tomorrow: what is produced by human action can be changed by human action. In this understanding of class, people are connected with the economic realities that underlie their lives. To talk of class as merely "distinctive psychological orientations" is to divorce personal lives from the realities that influence them, hide the inequalities that rule those lives, and obstruct a perception of the possibilities for changing the social structure and, thereby, the lives of men.

Banfield's use of the term "culture" has a similarly tendentious quality; it serves further to shroud reality in mystery. The label "cultural" implies that patterns of thought and behavior cannot be explained by racial or psychological theories. A further implication, one upon which Banfield's entire analysis rests, is that culture exerts an independent affect on behavior. "Deferred gratification" may originate as a way an emerging class copes with a hostile social and political environment, but it can eventually become part of a moral code to which everyone is expected to conform. As a "value" it becomes a motive of individuals through "the socialization process," and socialization, in turn, insures that culture and personality are integrated and mutually reinforcing, thus functioning as a force for social inertia.

Unfortunately, cultural realities are not so straightforward and uncomplicated, though Banfield would like us to believe it is all this simple. Not all group responses to exigencies are cultural in the sense that they are so deeply embedded, culturally and psychologically, as to be highly intractable to change. Some patterns are strongly valued, while others exist at more superficial levels because circumstances permit no alternatives: the experience of middle-aged, unskilled workers at the poverty line suggests that their future will be as bleak as their past. Their response —to live in the present—is a "cultural" one, but it could change fairly rapidly if circumstances would permit future payoffs for present self-denial. Banfield's use of "culture" does not, however, allow for these essential distinctions.[5]

There is an additional complexity. Any description of a subculture inevitably emphasizes distinctive characteristics; it ignores or minimizes aspects of a subculture shared with other groups which motivate actions in ways different from what is assumed to be the main thrust of the subculture. Put differently, a subculture is not a consistent whole but an entity shot through with conflicting elements: "commitment to values, norms, and other cultural themes may often involve ambiguity, ambivalence, and the simultaneous holding of alternative or contradictory beliefs." [6] What appear to be strong impulses to action under one set of circumstances may be severely weakened by a change in circumstances.

For more is at issue here than academic thrust and parry. Concepts define the world for us, and our understanding of reality goes a long way to determining what policy and action we are willing to back. Class and culture emphasize that men's lives are the result of historical forces, that the style and quality of life are not fixed by nature or the supernatural. What some would have us see as permanent is, in reality, impermanent; social and cultural realities change through human action. Forces flowing from class and culture are far less inexorable than those immanent in biological structure. To raise, as Banfield does, the specter of class and culture as implacable forces with an unbreak-

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[5] See Herbert J. Gans, *People and Plans* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), Chapter 22. This criticism was developed in reference to the culture of poverty theory, but it is applicable to Banfield. The objections raised by Gans and others are known to Banfield (he cites the relevant literature) but he makes no attempt to deal with them.

[6] Charles A. Valentine, *Culture and Poverty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 120.

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able grip on people is nothing less than a process of mystification.

If concepts are perverted to make reality seem something other than it is, we find something of the same process when we raise an empirical question: To what extent does Banfield offer a valid description of the "inward" nature and behavior of the lower-class person?

While his description is based upon a fairly large and familiar body of social science research data collected over the past two decades, there are some major difficulties in the way Banfield chooses to use the data. As he himself points out, not all his statements have the same status vis à vis known fact:

> Most of the statements about time horizons . . . are empirical. . . . The main proposition, namely, that individuals and cultures have differing time orientations toward the future is of this character. . . . Some propositions, however, are *implications* of the main proposition; they are themselves deductive . . . arrived at from premises that have been inductively established. No "data" support the statement that present-oriented persons are unconcerned about the welfare of their grandchildren yet unborn; such a statement follows from the meaning of present orientation.

By the same token there is no evidence supporting the proposition that future-oriented persons are concerned about their potential grandchildren, to say nothing of upper-class people who worry about great-grandchildren. Since no one claims a lack of concern about sons and daughters in the lower class, the only empirically supported proposition left is that members of all classes are concerned with their children's welfare. An unexciting conclusion to be sure, but certainly a better basis for prudent social policy than one drawn from dramatic but factually unsupported propositions.

There are other peculiarities in the use of data. In contrasting the effects of "disincentives" to work, Banfield notes that raising the income tax rate does not seem to have much affect on the motivations of the middle class. But "low-income earners" react differently: "That they will not work when welfare payments are as much or more than they could earn is to be expected, of course." This carries a citation from the McCone Commission Report on the Watts riot which notes that grants under Aid to Families with Dependent Children were greater than what could be earned at minimum-wage jobs. Banfield then states, "it also appears that many poor persons will not put forth effort to get 'extras' once they have been assured of a level of living which, while extremely low, seems to them to be 'enough.' " This is followed by the further proposition that "the higher the floor that is put under incomes, the greater the number of workers who will see no reason to work." The one empirical datum in the course of this argument is only tangentially related to it. The finding that welfare payments are sometimes higher than earnings at minimum wage does not tell us whether it does *in fact* act as a disincentive, under what conditions, and for how many it will be a disincentive. Not only are the two inferences unsupported, but they have no factual base. There is, of course, the further difficulty of whether the two types of disincentives mentioned are comparable.

Some of the difficulties of relying upon unsupported inference is illustrated by data gathered by a survey of AFDC mothers in six counties of Wisconsin including Milwaukee: over half the respondents had positive attitudes about working, and "most AFDC recipients would like to work if their children could be taken care of, especially younger women or women with recent employment." Having preschool children, which might seem an excellent rationalization for a lack of interest in jobs, turned out, on the contrary, to be associated with "the desire to have a job." Although Banfield claims that class rather than race is important, in this

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sample, at least, race does seem to have some sort of independent effect: "71 percent of the blacks want a job either 'very much' or 'somewhat' as compared with 50 percent of the whites in Milwaukee." Only "one-third of the Milwaukee respondents had previous experience with AFDC," and the "percentage of white women who were repeaters was higher than for black women." [7] One wonders whether T. H. Huxley's remark about Herbert Spencer applies to Banfield as well: "Spencer's definition of a tragedy was the spectacle of a deduction killed by a fact."

Sometimes the reported facts, when traced to the source, do not have the same meaning or significance that Banfield's text gives them. The latter reads: "The incidence of mental illness is greater in the lower class than in any of the others. Moreover, the nature of lower-class culture is such that much behavior that in another class would be considered bizarre seems routine." Three sources are cited in a footnote.[8] One, a study of the families of delinquent boys, confirms after a one-page survey of the literature the association of "poverty and pathology." A citation from Myers and Roberts is for part of their discussion of the importance of money in the lower class and the psychological stress its lack entails. The only possible instance of "bizarre" behavior found here is in a quotation from an interview: "In fact everybody in our family has to worry about it [money] except my old man when he gets drunk." The page cited from a monograph by Hollingshead and Redlich occurs in the chapter, "Paths to the Psychiatrist." On page 172 they note that while "perception of the psychological nature of personal problems is a rare trait in any class" it is most frequently found in the upper strata. Consequently, "more abnormal behavior is tolerated" by the lower strata "even though the behavior may be disapproved by class norms." On page 174 the following paragraph runs to the top of page 175, the page cited by Banfield:

> Although the patient presents a lifelong history of hostility, suspicion, and extreme lack of consideration of others, so far as we are able to determine neither his family nor others in his environment—even when his behavior became violent—considered him a "psychiatric problem" . . . people in all strata have blind spots regarding psychopathological implications of unusual behavior or even deliberately avoid thinking about them. The lower-status patient will attribute his troubles to unhappiness, tough luck, laziness, meanness, or physical illness rather than to factors of psychogenic origin. The worst thing that can happen to a Class V person is to be labeled "bugs," "crazy," or "nuts." Such judgment is often equal to being sentenced for life to the "bughouse." Unfortunately, this sentiment is realistic.

The remainder of the page contains two case histories of "compulsory promiscuous" behavior of a middle-class and a lower-class girl. Now, at minimum, a somewhat different picture of the problem of "abnormal behavior" and class emerges from this discussion than from Banfield's statement that is presumably based on it.

SIMILAR questions can be and have been raised about the factual basis of the central thesis: lower-class individuals are incapable of deferring gratifications. The research literature indicates that in the lower class there is a distinct tendency not to defer gratifications—although this pattern is found not only in the lower class.[9] A major difficulty

[7] Joel F. Handler and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, *The "Deserving Poor": A Study of Welfare Administration* (Chicago: Markham, 1971), p. 143; pp. 60f.

[8] Banfield's note, page 276, reads: "Jerome K. Myers and B. H. Roberts, *Family and Class Dynamics in Mental Illness* (New York: Wiley, 1959), p. 174. See also [A. B.] Hollingshead and [Frederick C.] Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness* [New York: Wiley, 1958], p. 175, and S. Minuchin et al., *Families of the Slum* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 34."

[9] For a review and analysis see S. M. Miller et.

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with the data, though, is assessing its significance. Banfield sees "deferred gratification" as one of those autonomous cultural patterns that remain "for all practical purposes fixed"; that is, unaffected by changes in material conditions. But it is equally plausible, on the basis of what we know, to see the persistence of the pattern as a functional adaptation to severely restrictive life situations.

Consider some of the conditions that must prevail if such a pattern is to become established and continue: an orientation to time that makes connections between present and future behavior demands some freedom from constant preoccupation with meeting pressing immediate needs—shoes for the children and next month's rent. Concentration on the present may be needed for survival in the present. To be oriented to the future requires some reasonable basis for believing that present behavior will result in a better future. And even if low-income earners could subject themselves to extra deprivations by adhering to the bourgeois virtue of regular savings, the money they would put in the bank could not make as much difference to their children's education, say, as investment programs of highly paid executives.

Even if one could save significant amounts, the opportunities one is saving for must be present in the future. Traditionally American workers have dreamed of becoming small businessmen, but a small business comes to seem a less and less viable alternative in a modern economy. If these necessary conditions are not present it is difficult to see how one can reasonably expect lower-class persons to defer gratifications. What would one say of the rationality or even the mental health of those who persistently deferred pleasures in the face of only slim chances of future payoffs? [10]

In fact, fewer and fewer people in all classes seem to be denying themselves present pleasures. Support for the existence of the deferred-gratification pattern used to be found in Kinsey's report that middle-class people began having sexual intercourse at a later age than those in lower strata.[11] Today this pleasure does not appear to be unduly postponed in any class. Between 1960 and 1970 consumer installment credit rose from $43 billion to $101.2 billion.[12] Even discounting for inflation, this suggests a rapidly declining rate of deferred gratification.

If large numbers of people in all classes are choosing only one type of behavior, how valid is it to talk of the existence of a pattern of a deferred gratification that distinguishes one stratum from another? The lower class, in short, is being reproached and condemned for not conforming to a pattern of behavior that is probably disappearing in the rest of the society.

Banfield is aware of critical assessments of the data but chooses not to discuss them. Given this glorification of self-denial along with his penchant for unsupported inferences and his conception of class and culture, there seems to be an insistent perverseness in his approach. But "perverseness" suggests mere idiosyncracy where, in fact, we are dealing with a modernized version of an older ideological bias.

Class and race are classificatory concepts. Race categorizes in terms of biological givens, traits beyond control or change ex-

al., "Poverty and Self-Indulgence: A Critique of the Non-Deferred Gratification Pattern," in Louis A. Ferman et al., eds., *Poverty in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), pp. 285–302. Banfield cites this paper, but does not respond to the theoretical and empirical points it raises.

[10] For a summary statement—based on Miller et. al., *op. cit.*—of the conditions that would have to be fulfilled in order to get valid data testing Banfield's proposition see S. M. Miller and Ronnie Steinberg Ratner, "The American Resignation: The New Assault on Equality," *Social Policy*, May–June 1972, p. 8.

[11] Louis Schneider and Sverre Lysgaard, "The Deferred Gratification Pattern: A Preliminary Study," *American Sociological Review*, April 1953, p. 143.

[12] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Pocket Data Book, USA 1971* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 313.

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cept through long-term evolutionary processes. Members of a class possess mutable characteristics that change with changes in society. *But if a class is defined in terms of psychological orientations rather than social location, then structural change becomes for all practical purposes an irrelevant consideration.* (Banfield is aware, of course, that many psychological traits change relatively quickly, but any changes in orientations like present-mindedness, he emphasizes, "must occur very slowly" because they are rooted in culture.) This means that the logical status of Banfield's concept of class comes to be equivalent to that of race: the thought and behavior of members of a class, as with members of a race, are unrelated to the nature of the society. Just as racist dogma focuses on the fixed biological constitution of man as the source of behavior, so Banfield's class concept directs attention to the relatively immutable "inward" traits of individuals. Banfield's formulation is thereby to be seen as a species of conceptual alchemy.

His idea of class has, for some, its ideological attractions. A traditional function of race has been to justify and defend inequality and domination. But race has fallen on hard times, and as a result Banfield's formulation comes to seem attractive to the kinds of minds who would earlier have been drawn to race. His "class" converts an idea antagonistic to the meaning and implications of race to the political and ideological ends served by the latter.

But for the transmutation to work a somewhat similar operation must be performed on the concept of culture. This concept developed, in part, as a reaction to that of race: cultural anthropologists were committed to demonstrating that the culture concept was a better explanatory notion than race. Since what had to be explained seemed to be relatively persistent and fixed in the history of a society, and since the societies under examination were in fact slow to change, the consistent and mutually reinforcing elements of culture were stressed, elements producing consensus and stability.

Once race was supplanted as the dominant intellectual orientation, and attention focused on modern societies, the conception of culture as a unitary and consistent whole could no longer be maintained. The idea of "subculture," for example, was partially a consequence of the realization that the culture of a modern society was not a unitary whole —as one moved from group to group one expected to find differences, contradictions, counterpushes and pulls. Culture, therefore, is a source not only of order and stability but of disorder and change, and what is true of culture as a whole is true of subcultures as well. A more complex picture of subculture emerges from descriptions by those not committed to a perception of social reality as fixed and unchanging:

> A constant source of frustration to most lower-class individuals is their awareness that despite the surface validity of the self they present, their behavior is not consistent with some of the standards of the larger society which they have internalized, often in spite of themselves. . . . Seeking to become a valid person in a more conventional way remains attractive even though the probability of success may be low.[13]

This suggests that a view of the lower-class person as one who, for example, is "engaged in an unremitting search for sex" may be a highly oversimplified version of a more deeply textured reality. The lower-class person shares moral aspirations and qualities with others in the society. But those who see no contradiction between justice and inequality *must* distinguish strata in terms of their moral qualities:

> Man is so built that he cannot achieve perfection of his humanity except by keeping down his lower impulses. He cannot rule his body by persuasion. This fact alone shows

[13] Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), p. 383.

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> that even despotic rule is not per se against nature. . . . To take the extreme case, despotic rule is unjust only if it is applied to beings who can be ruled by persuasion or whose understanding is insufficient: Prospero's rule over Caliban is by nature just.[14]

If, on the other hand, Prospero and Caliban as moral beings are more like than unlike, Prospero's order will be called into question.

Nor may Caliban claim, according to this view of the "just society," that his material needs are not being met by that order. Where once the inequities he might have railed against could be justified by recourse to the differing needs of superior and inferior racial stocks, today one refers to the "basic needs" of fixed and unchanging cultural milieus. By the standard invoked by Banfield, one which he says "changes so slowly as to be for all practical purposes fixed," Prospero's order is the best of all possible worlds. Thus the transmuted concepts of class and culture perform the ideological tasks once fulfilled by baser intellectual coinage.

The Unheavenly City is oriented to the needs of a policy-maker who is finally admonished not to be too active. Banfield recommends to his notice the beneficial consequences of such "accidental forces" as "economic growth"—a modern, secular version of "the divine hand" that used to produce the harmonious society. But in an age when even a Republican president recognizes the prophetic voice of Keynes, one wonders whether any future-oriented policy-maker, duly concerned about the "community, the nation . . . mankind," could in good conscience accept so backward-looking a view of man and society as that offered to him by Edward Banfield. □

[14] Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 132 f.

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Jean Bloch-Michel

On the Idea of "European Unity"

A Report on the Vicissitudes of a Movement

The three political fathers of the idea of a United Europe—Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide de Gasperi—had each experienced excesses of nationalism that made them sense the urgency of devising a political solution for nationalistic confrontations. Schuman was a Lorrainer, de Gasperi came from the Trentino, and Adenauer was a Rhinelander. The Lorrainer came from a province that had become German in 1870, had reverted to being French in 1918, became German again in 1940 and, finally, French once more in 1944. De Gasperi had represented his province in the Austrian Diet under Franz Josef, and subsequently was elected to the Italian Parliament. Adenauer was also well placed to recognize the difficulties created by the fact of belonging to a disputed and sometimes divided community.

Such experiences suggest why these men formulated a concept of a united Europe that differed from the ideas that first inspired Jean Monnet. They visualized what was essentially a political community ideal. Monnet, because of his experience in two world wars, took as his point of departure economic facts that to him seemed obvious: the economies of the European nations are fated to be at once competitive and complementary. Competition had been one of the causes of both world conflicts. Peace in Europe could be achieved only through such an economic community. In time it would also bring about a power complex capable of counterbalancing the two big powers, Russia and the U.S.

I should add that for these men a united Europe meant a Catholic Europe (Catholic, not merely Christian). They found ready justification for leaving out those two land's ends of Europe, Anglican England and Protestant Prussia. The Europe they envisaged was to be unified around the Christian Democratic movement—then in power in France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy—and which drew on the progressive Catholic movements of the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

As these founding fathers visualized it, a united Europe must be not so much an economic as a moral and political power, and it must demonstrate that, thanks to Christian Democracy, it is possible to transcend fraternal quarrels between nations. The rest of the world was conceived as a series of markets on the frontiers of Europe; they would receive a sustained political education that would help them develop in the desired direction.

None of the three men foresaw the rebirth of nationalism. It was like the old dilemma of the chicken and the egg: was this reawakening caused by the failures of European politics, or were the failures of European politics caused by this reawakening? In my view, it would be hazardous to say.

The concept of "nationhood" was born in Europe. For more than a century—from the French Revolution to World War II—it nourished and inspired political action. The concept was so potent that neither French

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nor German socialists were able to rid themselves of it. Similarly, the Communist party, whether in power, as in the U.S.S.R., or in opposition, as in France, constantly involved nationalism. Still, developments in 1940, 1945, and later, cruelly belied the beliefs of European nationalists. The defeat of France, the defeat of Germany, the obliteration of the free nations of Central and Eastern Europe, and the collapse of the French and British colonial empires dealt profound blows to nationalist sentiment. Yet when one is dealing with beliefs that have little or nothing to do with reason, the believer who finds his beliefs threatened clings to them even more urgently.

France is a case in point. Defeated in 1940, owing her liberation only to the Allies (her armed forces and the Resistance could, at best, save no more than "honor"), and then losing her colonial empire, France had two options. The reasonable one was to consider herself a second-class power and act accordingly. People who elected this position were, as I well remember, disdainfully told, "In a word, you want France to become like Switzerland!" The unreasonable but satisfying position—satisfying in the sense that it compensated for past humiliations—was for France to proclaim herself a great power, an indestructible entity, never to be assimilated into any other community because of characteristics eternally peculiar to herself.

This argument derives from a way of thinking one would place back in the time of Barrès, Maurras, and the Chambre Bleu Horizon. It is also the thinking that a man such as Michel Debré invokes whenever he speaks up with his almost demented stubbornness and the brand of nominalism that often characterizes irrational policies: by dint of speaking of what does not exist, one will force that of which one speaks to come into existence.

FOR MEN of the Left who belong to my generation—men who became politically aware in the 1930s—this rebirth of nationalism is cause for astonishment. If someone had told us in our twenties that in 1972 we would still have to listen to Debré shouting "We are nationalists!"—resurrecting the watchword of the fascist movements we used to battle in the Latin Quarter—we certainly would not have believed it. And no more could we have foreseen the influence Enoch Powell would wield in England, or Franz Josef Strauss in Germany. Yet this is how things stand.

Two other and surprising phenomena have occurred that, on the surface, are contradictory. By nature, nationalism seems to have a centralizing effect, yet the growing weight of centralized bureaucracies has brought about a *fragmentation* of nationalism. In France, the movement toward decentralization, which in certain respects may be justified, is linked with a spirit of regionalism not without its dangers. Some ten years ago, I attended a meeting of the Occitan Pen Club (presently there will be founded, and why not, a Basque and a Breton Pen Club), where I heard young writers from the French Midi talk, in the same tone Algerian writers once would have used, about the colonial oppression inflicted upon them. Recently I was no less astonished to read in Austrian papers that the residents of Carinthia, led by the mayors of their villages, had rebelled against a government proposal that road signs carry the names of their villages in both German and Slovenian, since a substantial minority of Slovenes live in the area. For good measure, the anti-Slovenian Austrian nationalists seized upon the occasion of a visit by Chancellor Bruno Kreisky to their area to organize a demonstration in 100-percent Nazi style, during which one heard again anti-Jewish slogans. Centralizing vs. decentralizing nationalism—today, in almost all of Europe, whether East or West—is the form assumed in a development that, in varying degrees of intensity, appears in Brittany as well as Ireland, the Basque country and Flanders, in Croatia as well as the Ukraine.

The broader genre of "fatherland" nationalism has been encouraged, I think, by what

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seems to me the chief error committed by the early partisans of a united Europe. It was their proposal that the Coal and Steel Community be followed by a second common endeavor—the European Defense Community. At the time American policy aimed at rearming Germany, no matter what the cost, in order to contain—if not one day repulse—the ambitions of Stalinist Russia. Those who urged an EDC claimed that German rearmament within EDC would be the lesser evil. I do not believe that: I consider it was the very worst way of coping with the problem. Memories of the Nazi experience were still fresh enough to open the way to every kind of propaganda appeal ("Our soldiers under the command of German generals!")—but also implicit in the proposal was the risk of making Europe the "best weapon" in the Cold War. However, the dual opposition of nationalists and Communists doomed the initiative in advance.

A rapid review of the events of 1972 is enough to persuade one that, while nationalistic ideas flourish, there is still no such thing as a European mentality or any popular dedication to Europeanism. Yes, England has joined the Common Market. But had the decision to join been submitted to a referendum, there is little doubt the response would have been negative. The French referendum was favorable but no resounding endorsement of European unity.

Other referenda took place. Norway voted no. It was, *Le Monde* declared, a heterogeneous coalition of "leftists, nationalists, farmers, and partisans of a return to nature," to which one should add all those who depend for their livelihood on the fishing industry and have no wish to see French, English, or German fleets in their territorial waters. Ireland voted yes. Irish nationalists think that by joining a united Europe they may be able to break away from the confrontation with Great Britain. What's more, they think that with this move they can escape from the status of an underdeveloped country, to which British policy has reduced them. I do not believe one can see in this positive response any Europeanism whatever; that ideal is as absent from the minds of the Norwegian voters who said no as it is from the minds of the Irish or Danish voters who said yes.

It is against this background that we must consider the problem of the Europe of the Nine. All nine nations are subject to the centripetal and centrifugal pressures of nationalism and the struggle against nationalism; centralization and the struggle against centralization. For years nationalist opposition to a united Europe has offered the thesis that the destiny of individual nations must not be entrusted to a "soulless technocracy"; the implication is that major decisions would in that case be taken by "bureaucrats" operating without "democratic control." In other circumstances, this contention could be taken seriously. In our situation today it is comical. It assumes that if we were to put ourselves in the keeping of this "soulless technocracy," we would be sacrificing the democratic processes whereby the decisions that concern us most closely are made. But this technocracy disregards the fact that every nation in Europe is governed today almost exclusively by a technocracy. (Whether technocracy has a "soul" is a question I would not venture to discuss.)

In our French papers, we read daily protests against the encroachments of an administration that increasingly eludes control. This is only one of many signs of the mounting difficulty parliamentary systems are encountering as they seek to adapt to industrial and, even more, to a postindustrial civilization.

The average European finds it hard enough to feel he has any responsibility for, and therefore should concern himself with, what goes on in his own country. As for decisions that affect the future of Europe, these, he feels, are arrived at far away from him; aside

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from someone with special interests—cheesemongers, stockbreeders, fishermen, or grain farmers—the average man does not feel involved. I might add that if he thinks this way, he does so not out of self-interest or blindness. He has good reasons for being much more interested in what happens in American or German elections than in what happens between Pompidou and his eight Market partners. We French have the impression that what takes place in America or in Germany concerns us more directly.

THE EXISTENCE of an entity called "Europe" has been surrounded by indifference on the part of Europeans, except for the few years following immediately upon its birth. The one passion, however, that has been aroused in Europe is the fervor of anti-Europeans. The only people showing a modicum of heat have been opponents of Great Britain's entry into the community of Europe.

My comparison will perhaps be deemed frivolous, but the campaign waged by the British adversaries of a united Europe reminded me of the endless discussions for or against the death penalty. No government of an advanced country concedes that capital punishment is of the slightest value, either as an example or a deterrent. But in countries where it is still administered—France is one—very few statesmen are courageous enough to challenge the powerful attachment the popular unconscious exhibits for this archaic punishment. The moment there is talk of doing away with it, you hear the same worn-out arguments ("a field day for murderers"). They reflect stonewall attitudes that crime statistics and the certitudes of psychology or physiology may never unsettle. So it was that in Great Britain the most telling arguments against joining a united Europe were those that arose from ancient depths of the popular consciousness or unconscious. Insular feelings were aroused: the taste for a traditional particularism; the fear that somehow the provisos of the Common Market would force the British public to feed on frogs and sauerkraut; the notion that the nice cup of tea would soon disappear, together with warm ale and the boiled joint with mint sauce, their place preempted by rivers of red wine and Pernod and a garlic-laden cuisine—all these things mattered, not to mention problems still more serious like adoption of the metric system and giving up driving on the left. Such considerations come to the fore in the campaign.

Not that such feelings should be denied a measure of justification. We are all attached to our given ways of living. One does not live, eat, and drink in France as one does in England, Germany, or Italy. But, in this connection, it must be pointed out that one does not live, eat, and drink in Normandy as one does in the Provence, or in Wales as in Scotland, or in Piedmont as in Sicily. If this statement was irrefutable 50 years ago, today it must be ever so slightly tempered: in all these places one drinks Coca-Cola.

This is not just a little joke; it is a fact of great importance. Yet our nationalists give it scant attention. The opponents of Great Britain's entry into a unified Europe were mistaken: there is little danger they will see their country Frenchified. But what does seem to threaten us all today is that our ways of life will be uniformly Americanized—one reason being that the American way of life is adapted to an economic and social situation toward which we are all heading.

Whatever happens to the European community—whether it remains embryonic (i.e., economic) or is transformed into a true socio-political entity—it has already embarked in a direction that must lead toward an end no longer entirely of our choosing. I have traveled a great deal in Europe in these last years, and what has struck me the most is that all cities look alike. Encircling—smothering—a historical core that now is no more than picturesque, a kind of local-architecture museum, our cities are everywhere the same. I defy the traveler who arrives unexpectedly in a strange city to say, without looking at the color of the sky or listening

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to people speak, whether he has reached Bucharest or Munich or Athens or Naples or Belgrade. Concrete has exigencies that are stronger than national traditions.

One can say that European uniformity, if not European unification, is being created by the impact of things—identical expressways with their identical motels where spurious "local specialties" strive feebly to give you a sense of place. This uniformity is dictated by the fact that all, or nearly all, the countries of Europe are obeying the technical imperatives of postindustrial civilization, and this is manifest equally in architecture, in the excessive growth of cities, in pollution, and in an expanding "soulless technocracy." Even what we eat is commencing to taste the same everywhere: today chicken has the same taste—and it is an indifferent taste—in all countries because everywhere poultry is fed the same diet. And even the sauce is no longer of any help.

This standardization of life by no means guarantees understanding and peace, because it is unaccompanied by a unification of structures, not to speak of loyalties. We have learned long ago to recognize the importance of superstructures, but we realize that uniformity in living is not necessarily a sign of unified life. Nor is the uniformity of superstructures: medieval Christian Europe endured for several centuries on the foundation of shared ideas and beliefs, yet her people, who were living in very similar socioeconomic situations, never stopped tearing each other apart. So today uniformity of superstructures will not suffice to create unity.

The founding fathers understood this. Although the first European community they founded was economic in nature, they all insisted that the unification of Europe must be political in nature, and thus they paid unconscious tribute to Maurras's slogan "the political first," to which perhaps too little importance has been attached because his politics were not our politics.

So the danger Europe faces today is not standardization, to which our civilization itself may actually condemn us. The danger is the belief that standardization will lead to unity and that little by little, thanks to the machinery of the Common Market, the monetary guarantees, and Euratom (the European Atomic Energy Community), political Europe will be self-built, as it were, by virtue of the principle which states that superstructures are conditioned by infrastructures. This pseudo-Marxism will lead only to disillusionment.

It is not impossible that the spectacle provided by European rivalries during the dollar crisis will lead nations to take measures to limit the divergencies between their monetary policies, although such measures can only be artificial so long as foreign economic, social, and even political policies are not in accord. I can imagine that, in a general way, business will be conducted in the future on a European scale, and that Mercedes, Citroën, Fiat, and Daimler, the producers of wine in the French Midi, and the producers of Danish butter and German beer will find themselves in a new and more or less favorable situation that will have developed directly from the machinery of the Common Market. It is equally plausible that industrial concentrations, which have already begun to appear, will be more and more capable of ignoring frontiers and even, some day, of achieving a body of European corporation law or a regulatory code on behalf of European firms, and that these measures will favor the growth of our economies by permitting their rhythm to be more easily controlled. However, none of this will make a Montedison or Renault worker, a Beauce farmer, or a Scottish sheep-grower feel more European. Europe will exist the day when it is created by men, not by governments or business enterprises. In other words, the day when we see the birth of a political Europe that is the democratic expression of the ensemble of citizens who compose it.

There is a strong possibility that this

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democratic expression will assume a form different from current ones. We may finally discover that an English-style parliamentarianism or an American-style presidential system will be overtaken by history. If the nations of Europe want to survive, they must move beyond their present national structures and their reliance on alliances. Yet who in Europe today is capable of disengaging himself from bourgeois ideologies or the Marxist litany (not from Marxism) to discover and attempt to apply a form of democracy suitable for a union of states and nations?

At the moment, only one movement seems to me capable of this imaginative effort—syndicalism as it has newly developed, and notably in France with the CFDT (the federation of Christian trade unions). Were I asked if an unchallengeably European development has taken place in the last two decades, I would answer yes. But it was not the signing of this or that treaty, not this or that summit meeting, not the "historic" entry of Great Britain into the Common Market; it was the most recent Michelin strike. When one Michelin shop in France stopped work and halted production, the workers in Michelin's German and Dutch factories refused to increase their production, as they had been asked to do, in order to avoid weakening the bargaining position of their French comrades. Those workers allowed us to witness what was perhaps the first manifestation of European solidarity. The day they learned that their German and Dutch comrades were sharing in their fight or, at least, doing nothing to hinder it, those several dozen workers in a Clermont-Ferrand factory perhaps felt themselves to be Europeans.

Translated by ADRIENNE FOULKE □

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Joel Guttman

Measuring the Quality of Life

The phrase "quality of life" seems to defy definition. As the battle cry of the ecology movement, it has acquired a multitude of connotations. Yet an attempt is underway not only to define but to measure the quality of life—an attempt that may greatly influence the direction of future government activity.

The attempt to measure the quality of life is motivated by the increasingly complex problems of government planning and regulation of industry. Within the broad bounds set by Congress, the nation's priorities are continually being ordered by the agencies of the executive branch. When, for example, a new standard of air quality is formulated, a number of conflicting interests must be considered. The benefit of clean air must be weighed not only against the cost of pollution-control devices but also against the cost of the increased unemployment resulting when higher costs force industries to employ fewer workers. Choosing a route for a new highway or mass-transit link, determining the entrance fee for a new national park, or choosing the size of a new public school are similarly much more than "technical" decisions.

One way to "solve" such problems is to let the affected interest groups lobby and persuade or pressure the relevant bureaucrat to decide according to their own interests. Those who support this approach claim that it is the best approximation to "democratic" methods possible under the circumstances. But, clearly, political influence is not distributed equally; often those most adversely affected by a government project are not politically organized at all.

The alternative approach, which has become more common since World War II, is that of "systems" and "cost-benefit" analysis. In this approach a government planner or a consulting firm tries to quantify the costs and benefits of a specific proposal, usually in monetary terms, and the decision-maker is supposed to choose the alternative with the highest ratio of benefits to costs. Thus, it is claimed, social planning can avoid the biases of the "bargaining" approach.

Such analyses, of course, are seldom purely objective and apolitical. Strong interest groups continue to influence the planners, and, through the manipulation of a few key variables, cost-benefit analyses can often be used to justify any project or regulation. Nevertheless, with the analytical tools developed over the last two decades, a genuine alternative to political bargaining does exist and is now increasingly applied.

A major problem of the systems approach is how to quantify the wide range of consequences of public-works projects and government regulations. How does one put a price on the noise created by a new highway, or on the benefit of an added dollar spent on education, or on the "aesthetic cost" of a huge new dam? Such questions have led to the growth of the "social-indicator movement," which has encouraged the development of statistics purporting to measure such "intangibles." The pamphlet *Toward a Social Report*—written by a number of social scientists for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1969—is representative of this effort.

In the United States the social-indicator movement is tied to the very moderate liberalism of the Kennedy-Johnson years, and systems analysis was first developed at such think tanks

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as Rand, which are close to the defense establishment. But the problems these techniques are helping to solve are of particular concern to the socialist, who must develop ways for government to undertake an even broader range of projects than it undertakes at present. Thus it is not surprising that West European nations embracing varying degrees of "socialisticness" have taken a great interest in both social indicators and a quality-of-life index.

No one, however, has yet solved the basic problem of the systems approach. For even if the various consequences of a given action are fully measured, there is no known way of "objectively" measuring their relative importance. What value to society, for instance—to take our example of a pollution-control regulation—are the jobs that will be lost because of new tight controls, versus the cleaner air against which these jobs must ultimately be traded? It is clearly not satisfactory to simply note the trade-offs involved and let an insulated decision-maker choose the "optimal" rule. For this would be just as biased a rule as those resulting from the old-style bargaining process, if not more so.

A lesser evil would be to devise an index that would combine the various effects into a single measure registering the "net" gain or loss of a particular project. If the "weights" of this index are chosen so that they reflect the relevant community's preferences, the decision-maker would have a concrete indication of what kinds of decisions are really in the public interest. The index might not be as desirable as a referendum on each project, but the latter is clearly not feasible. It would certainly be an improvement over the bargaining process, in which only the best-organized and wealthiest interest groups can influence the decision.

It should be emphasized that such an index would have meaning only with reference to a specific community and a specific proposed action. Developing an index of the quality of life for the whole United States would involve averaging out the quality of life of a suburbanite and a tenant in Harlem, of a farmer and a plumber, and so forth. The problems inherent in any such index could only be multiplied if this were attempted. But if the index is used to estimate the consequences of a specific action upon a more or less homogeneous, well-defined community, the resulting decision might conceivably be more equitable than alternative methods of choice. If the proposed action would affect several communities, separate index numbers could be estimated for each, and the resulting collection of summary numbers would presumably be better than none at all.

These last paragraphs summarize the thinking of a number of government agencies and private groups in their attempt to devise a quality-of-life index. An example is the county of San Diego, which is attempting to measure the costs and benefits of its efforts to clean up its environment. Other groups, such as the National Wildlife Federation, have taken a much more arbitrary approach and have sought to develop a single quality-of-life index for the whole of the United States. The Environmental Protection Agency is doing preliminary research toward developing a quality-of-life index, but it is too early to say whether the index would be used to judge between decisions and projects of a national scope. The groups involved have widely varying motivations and thus differing conceptions of what ought to be involved in a quality-of-life index. The government agencies, being under immediate pressure to justify their actions, are perhaps the most interested in "hard" data and quantification.

If any one of the contending approaches wins out, it would have a wide impact, simply because it would be used as a standard criterion of the desirability of alternative government actions. Thus a highway would be planned so that the impact of its noise on the affected communities' quality of life would be minimized, while simultaneously maximizing the time it would save for commuters. The whole range of government actions could conceivably be judged by this approach. Because of its extensive potential impact, the idea of a quality-of-life index is clearly not a technical matter. It deserves to be widely discussed, so that as many as possible of the problems involved are avoided—assuming, that is, it should be used at all.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY sponsored a conference in August 1972, at which this writer was a participant, entitled "The Quality of Life Concept—A Potential New Tool for Decision-makers." The papers presented at the conference by a number of

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government officials and researchers posed more questions than they answered.

Perhaps the most important issue is: how should "quality of life" be defined? Should it be the same as a person's happiness? In that case, one would have to include in the definition innumerable and presumably unmeasurable components of security, self-acceptance, fear, and the like. Should the quality of life, as a second possibility, be concerned only with objective conditions, such as the actual quality of the air or the actual level of public health? Or should it measure instead a community's level of *satisfaction* with such objective conditions? If it is the function of government to satisfy its constituents, then, some argue, the components should measure a community's satisfaction with objective conditions, and not only the conditions themselves. But if such an index were used as a criterion of government performance, it might provide an incentive for government officials to deceive the public. For a satisfaction-oriented quality-of-life index would imply that it makes no difference whether government actually improves conditions or simply convinces the public that existing conditions are satisfactory.

When such separate characteristics as the distribution of income and water quality must be combined in a single index, what principle should be used to determine their relative importance? Should the ratios of relative importance ("weights") always be the same as a community's preferences, as determined by a survey? Or should quality-of-life estimators claim, with Thoreau, that civilization has made it impossible for men and women to tell what is really important to themselves, and thus calculate the weights without regard to people's own stated preferences? A decision to simply register a community's preferences implies that it always knows what is best for itself and what its problems are. This may not be the case until a problem becomes glaringly serious. On the other hand, any attempt to estimate the "weights" without consulting the community whose quality of life is being estimated is clearly elitist and to be avoided.

Another serious issue: should a quality-of-life index attempt to measure "absolutes" such as *justice?* To omit such factors would be, to many, a refusal to face basic dimensions of any government decision. But a decision to measure justice (even if it could be done) and place it on a par with, say, the rapidity of mass transit raises a basic ethical problem. It would imply that if improvements in other areas are great enough, those improvements would "balance out" a decline in, for example, civil liberties.

There are also practical questions that are no less important to those concerned with democracy and social justice. Who will decide which characteristics of the quality of life should be measured? Presumably one person's list of characteristics is bound to be different from another's, because of differences in background and personality. If the choice of quality-of-life characteristics were restricted to a particular government or academic elite, the quality-of-life index would only be a measure of that elite's quality of life. Similarly, how would the data be collected, and to whom would it be reported? If data on the quality of life of a community were kept from those outside of government, it would become a political tool that could be used against the "outs." The Nixon administration's suppression of certain unemployment data and other social indicators is indicative of what can happen when the source of such data is tied too closely to government agencies.

CONSIDERING THESE and other difficulties, should the whole idea of a quality-of-life index be abandoned? It would be tempting to do so, if the alternatives to it were not as inadequate as they are.

At present, as we have noted, there are only two, equally undesirable, alternatives. The first, the interest-group bargaining approach, effectively eliminates the unorganized from the decision-making process. The second, systems and cost-benefit analysis using only GNP figures as estimators of relative value, is at best elitist and at worst ignores any consequence that cannot be readily valued in monetary terms.

This dilemma, it should be emphasized, is of particular importance to anyone trying to envision an alternative, socialist society. It is easy to say that the public ought to control certain economic relationships, but it is difficult to see how this can be done if the public cannot control its own government in the latter's day-to-day—but emphatically *un*technical—decisions. □

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Jeanne Binstock

Metamorphosis of the Mother

That great class of people, mothers, will be a mere specialty group by the year 2000, and women will be a postindustrial elite. Though it may seem as if this came about as a result of the women's liberation movement, the underlying causes will have been technological and economic. Through the widespread exploitation of two new technological advancements, birth control pills and the IUD, and modern medical care which has dramatically increased life expectancy, a change is being forced in the occupational identity of women.

Ultimately, the shift now taking place will be equal in scale to that of the 19th century, when the peasants of Europe were transformed into factory workers during the industrial revolution. Succeeding waves of technologies liberated first the middle classes, then the working classes, and now the young and the female sex from the Hobbesian natural world in which the strong dominated the weak. As new technologies penetrate people's daily lives, satisfying unfulfilled needs, new human wants and expectations erupt and are expressed as new ideologies.

Ideological change always occurs in response to technological change and permits large-scale voluntary occupational change. Just as Protestantism provided the ideological base for full participation in the industrial revolution, the women's liberation movement is providing the ideological base for the shift in personal identity that must underlie the occupational shift of great numbers of former mothers into new occupations of postindustrial society. It is hardly coincidental that women are starting to redefine their identity at precisely that moment in history when population must be drastically controlled and the technology for controlling it is available.

American women are suddenly shocked to discover that they feel as much exploited as protected. Women are now accusing men of treating them as "sexual objects." The historic fact is, however, that the majority of women in most parts of the world have always had an occupation *entirely dependent on their sexual functioning.*

Under natural conditions, a woman bears a child every 18 months. If she survives childbirth—a major occupational hazard—her life is totally devoted to nurturing and protecting the products of her body. In some parts of the world, it is equally routine for her to die in childbirth—a sexual death. Throughout history, 50 percent of the world's population (all the women) have been assigned the primary occupation of bearing and rearing children. This has been absolutely necessary for maintaining an adequate adult population. The job title was mother, just as other occupations were titled engineer, physician, or farmer. Like these, the occupation of mother was invested with a special vocabulary, life-style, and particular skills—in fact, an occupational mystique.

Only recently have the potential hazards of this role taken on an emergency aspect. Haunted by a future of nonstop baby production accompanied by an unprecedented rate of survival, we face the necessity that this ancient and honorable occupation fall into some disrepute. Emancipated from their biological and social bondage to this one occupation, women inevitably must be liberated to enjoy the fruits of other occupations—whether they want to be or not.

Women failed to emerge earlier from their old occupational role not because they were prevented from doing so by men, but because we lacked the right technologies to support such an emergence. Without modern medicine, they had to work full-time to replenish the species. Without contraception, they had no choice. But many women's feelings about the past, now released, are those of rage. It is an old pattern. As de Tocqueville said: "Patiently endured so long as it seemed beyond redress, a grievance comes to appear intolerable once the possibility of removing it crosses men's minds." Blame may be emotionally satisfying, but it is irrelevant and mistaken.

The young American middle- and working-class mother does not know what it means to be exhausted by childbirth, to fight to stay alive after childbirth, and to be obsessed by the fear

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of childbirth. Nor need she worry where her children's next meal is coming from or whether, with another infant on the way, there will be enough to go around. Instead of patience, nurturance, endurance, tenderness—the traditional virtues of women in all historical periods—we now have contraception and penicillin.

Now the typical American woman has two or three children instead of six or eight; childbirth and child-rearing are not battlegrounds of survival. If she is up at night, it is rarely because they are ill. The American mother has plently of household appliances, and other minor technological innovations that function as para-mothers. Specialized professionals such as doctors and psychiatrists, and specialized agencies such as schools, clubs, and television share her burden. Half-willingly and half-reluctantly, today's mother stands by, ambivalently watching her occupation being relentlessly pared down from a vital 24-hour-a-day trade to a marginal three-hour-a-day job, almost as easily done by someone else.

But every occupational group fights for its life in the face of technological obsolescence. As an occupational group mothers are not different from any other. Customary technical skills continue to be applied—an occupation in search of an object. The traditional mother's concerns and skills, which once served a crucial economic function, are now being converted into painful liabilities. Tender care has turned into excessive scrutiny. In an effort to maintain their traditionally useful job while its tasks are being stripped away or parceled out, mothers, particularly in the middle classes, are developing an obsession with their children's internal lives. Their children are at once their only occupational task and source of occupational legitimacy. They bind their children to themselves, usually by means of guilt, for to give them up, even when they are grown, means occupational retirement.

Great numbers of young people feel mothered to death, subject to a level of maternal investment that makes them scream for freedom. *Portnoy's Complaint* was a commercial success because Americans recognized the form, if not the specific ethnicity, of mothering as a now abusive occupation.

As they search for activities useful in traditional terms, mothers feel as hysterically pushed to the wall as their children. Faced with an outdated occupational group we secretly collude with the emergence of the women's liberation movement, knowing that occupational shifts involve painful transformations in personal identity.

FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, women were urged to "be themselves"—that is, to provide continuity, to promote understanding, to value the past, to conserve customs and ideals, to be responsible to those around them rather than to be, like men, responsible only to themselves and their principles. These "female" traits have been the traits requisite for child-rearing. Children are the continuity between the past and the future and it has always been the obligation of women everywhere to protect their children. Women became—were forced to become—society's shock absorbers and conciliators; fundamentally conservative, committed to stability and reconciliation rather than to thrust and experiment, responsible to others rather than responsible to themselves. These features were designated, however, as the "natural" assets of women, inherent in their biology, when in fact they are nothing more than the feelings and values suitable for the occupation of mothering.

Men with their economic independence (read, power) have been able to rely on force or the threat of it. Women, economically dependent on men and physically weak yet charged with being the protectors of children, have been able to gain their way only by influence, persuasion, and the guilt aroused by their powerlessness. Women have had to become placatory, yielding, and enticing; using seductive tricks to accomplish their goals.

Women will continue for some time so to define themselves, no matter what the cost, believing these traits to be rooted in their biology. They have been taught too long to be fearful of those other components in themselves which lurk below the surface but which society has defined as "masculine." Men, of course, are equally caught in specific definitions of sexual character, permitted to have, like women, only half the virtues of their full humanity. They have been conditioned to distrust in themselves that which is charming, tender, and compromising. In both cases narrow sexual definitions have caused serious internal laceration. Women are forced to use the

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back stairs to power, gaining their ends by undermining men or by seeking vicarious gratification through their sons, while stigmatizing themselves for being less than feminine. Men who are inclined toward protectiveness, amiability, and passivity feel unmanly and are covertly enraged by the mothers and wives who push them.

As long as women continue to remain economically dependent on their husbands and continue to have as their major economic commitments the rearing of children, they will continue to have these familiar occupational traits.

Since rapid occupational change can be achieved only with the help of ideological lubrication, the old ideology and identity are being scrubbed and new ones are being formed. The traditional view of motherhood has begun to collapse. No longer is it argued with the old conviction that women "naturally" love children, and are "naturally" sexually passive, or that the motives of women are less complex than those of men. The myth of women's sexual passivity has been a crucial ideological support of the mother's role, for this myth advises that a woman has no sexual or agressive needs, only nurturing ones, thereby establishing the preeminence of her children's needs over her own. For centuries such assumptions have been made and *lived by,* not because they were true, but because they kept the woman at her job by the implicit threat that society would (and should) wreak its awful sanctions upon her if she were to act "unnaturally."

Yet, some aspects of the new ideology and new identity are being built on the foundations of the old. Just as the executive who has specialized managerial skills can operate in a wide range of organizations, so women are transferring their home-grown skills to other contexts. Expert at socialization and enticement, by training if not biology, women are fanning out into the service industries, which just happen to need the skills of managing human feelings by persuasion. The pleasure-intensive industries—television, publishing, entertainment, advertising, the arts, the socialization industries—schools, colleges, and organizations dealing with marginal groups (the elderly, the poor, the mentally ill) whose clients, like children, need to have their competencies developed; the large corporations which need executives who are "people handlers"—conservers of human resources: all these enterprises must inevitably call more and more upon expertise that has already been defined as the woman's way of winning, by patience and finesse rather than by authority, by love and compromise rather than threat and coercion.

AS WOMEN RELINQUISH the occupational character traits associated with motherhood and economic dependency, new character traits will emerge, associated with uniquely female biological energies that are presently still dormant. Women's "basic nature" will undergo a metamorphosis.

In the noncontraceptive past, when women were defined as uninterested in sex (passive), a basic anxiety was kept dormant: the husband's fear that he, the economic provider of his wife's child, might not be its biological father. He could be sure that she would not pursue her sexual interests because she was defined as having none. At the same time that it reassured men of their biological paternity, the forced passivity also reinforced women's occupational commitment as mothers, for it drew on sexual energy to serve nurturing. Sexually active (impulsive) women were a danger to men and children, a luxury society could not afford. Now, with planned contraception, and the physical survival of children assured, women's sexual energies are beginning to be allowed some rein. Sexual passivity, once the mark of the lady, is becoming the mark of the docile and the fearful. Over time, and to an extent now unimaginable, seduction will be turned by women from a negative dependence or, at best, a passive pleasure into a positive activity. Women will not only be permitted to please themselves sexually, as men always have, but will be permitted to abstract their sexuality, publicly, rather than being forced to keep it concrete and private out of economic necessity.

Sexual integration, that which is woman, will be worked out in nonsexual ways as has sexual penetration, that which is man. Throughout history, men have specialized in exploration, investigation, depth, analysis, and finally implementation: making things "work." Sex-

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ual pleasure in women is expressed only at first in the desire to incorporate and embrace. Beyond that, it is expressed in the desire to synthesize in an internal explosion of feeling. Encouraged finally to the first, women have yet to be introduced to the latter. Full private pleasure, acknowledged, developed, and turned public, will be expressed in a welter of symbolized activities as yet unheard of. The art of yielding enticement at which females have been permitted to excel will in the future be employed more fully to balance and mediate the coercive strategies and tactics by which men have dominated the world. But when the active, impulsive, synthesizing component in women's sexuality is openly encouraged and women are free to create sexual meaning positively rather than merely passively, they will extend and abstract their natural "technological" talents, based on the full use of their biological equipment, into the real world, revolutionizing work and making it "feel good."

The woman's way, seduction and synthesis, will emerge as a critical human asset in the effective implementation of postindustrial society. The mind/machines that provide information and services will soon transcend in power and productivity the commodity-producing muscle/machines of the industrial revolution. The emphasis of the economy, as concern over scarcity of goods recedes, will be increasingly on services. Coercion and fear of punishment, the man's way of control, becomes increasingly useless as we shift from the dominance of physical power to the dominance of mental power. Trust will replace fear, reward will replace punishment, and seduction will replace coercion as we become more socially and organizationally interdependent.

Mothers will lose their rigidly defined occupational role. Fewer and fewer women will bear children, the decline continuing until that rock-bottom group of women is isolated, those who enjoy mothering and prefer it to other occupations,—perhaps a residue of 30 percent.

This will transform the family. The parent-child bond of today is the last of the great non-contractual relationships inherited from the past. Children are tied to their parents in precisely the same way as the serf was tied to his master—as a form of "inherited" property, involving specific obligations and privileges. As children become more rare and are increasingly recognized as a national resource, they will become too valuable to be owned by their biological parents, or solely guided by them. Good mothering will be redefined positively, as skill in assisting the child in determining and refining his interior assets, rather than negatively, as protecting him from physical and psychic harm. It will also be redefined as a freely chosen occupation and as easily done by men as by women.

Men and women will be unisex in that they each will incorporate traits previously defined as appropriate to the other sex, not only because it will permit each of them to more fully "be themselves," but because complex organizational interdependency, the emphasis on services, economic independence, and industrial involvement in which they both will be involved, will demand it. The result of this will be a new texture and richness in the character of both men and women as one more consequence of technological change.

Men and women will then be free for the first time to combine their highly specialized sexual energies in abstract ways, coupling in the world of work, as they have in more restricted ways and more privately in the past, and uniting the strengths of masculine-like investigation and feminine-like integration to meet the challenges of a revolutionized society.

The young, unconsciously anticipating this future, have already begun to redefine sexual character and parenthood. Young men wear their hair long, willingly carry babies on their backs, are antiwar and noncompetitive. Young women abjure skirts, act with cool deliberation, are often defiant and independent, and spend little time making marriage traps for men, physical or psychological. With children, both sexes act almost precisely the same.

The fantasies of the young herald the shape of the future. Rock heroes like Mick Jagger, Janis Joplin, and Robert Plant present themselves as androgynous—simultaneously man and woman—and this fantasied, public fusion excites youth with wild possibilities they cannot name. The under-thirties see this as the advent of moral freedom, but always behind new moralities lies inexorable economic change. Behind our new moralities is our embrace of a new historical era, post-industrialism. □

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How to Break Writers

We publish below two transcripts of conversations held by the Russian writer VICTOR FEINBERG, *who has been confined to a mental hospital, and various officials concerned with his case. The transcripts are reprinted with permission from* Esprit, *the Left Catholic magazine published in Paris. The first conversation was with an official investigating committee appointed to "straighten things out," and the second, two days later, with the doctor in charge of the hospital.*—ED.

I

FEINBERG: I believe it would simplify the problem to state that the KGB orders experts to designate such and such a political prisoner a mental case.

NADJAROV: Of course. Besides, it is better not to touch on politics. Each of us has his own opinions in that area.

FEINBERG: Let's begin with the question of expert opinion. It's common knowledge that in psychiatry diagnostic criteria are vague and diffuse. That's how it happens that a doctor who is guided by the recognized principle of "doubt in favor of the patient" often certifies a man as sick who is in perfect mental health. The man is then forced to submit to treatment. The result of all this is that a man who has committed the same acts for which his comrades are sent to concentration camps for a longer or shorter period of time—a man who has committed the same acts for the same motives—is judged mentally ill and is sent to a special hospital to undergo rigorous treatment. But whereas the term of imprisonment for the former is fixed once and for all by the courts, the "sick" man remains confined for as long as he has not recanted his opinions. The doctors don't mince words: "Your freedom depends on your good behavior. By good behavior we mean your political opinions. In other areas, you are perfectly healthy. Your sickness is that you think differently from the way one must think. As soon as you have renounced your opinions, you will be on the right road again and we will set you free."

NADJAROV: What you have just stated is impossible.

BELAEV: Who are the doctors who have told you such things?

FEINBERG: What's the point of enumerating them? All the doctors I've had anything to do with have told me this, in all the psychiatric wards I've been in. And you will note that they do not act like this on their own initiative. They are carrying out specific orders that have come down to them from above. Think for a moment. Suppose our government were to succeed in getting control of, say, the whole continent of Europe. How many special hospitals would have to be built then? And they'd have to commit quite a number of Communist leaders. Luigi Longo, for one.

BELAEV: You do not understand anything about psychiatry, your thinking is extremely superficial.

FEINBERG: One needs no great knowledge of psychiatry to find that dozens of perfectly healthy-minded men are kept confined for years, without the slightest hope of release, simply because they share the opinions of the larger part of humanity. Some of them are "treated" by being kept in isolation, others are given medication that powerfully affects the brain. Is this not the most refined, the most abject torture? You talk about commissions! Commissions, all of them, are reduced to ignobly spouting stupidities and banalities. To one and all, they go on saying that the invasion of Czechoslovakia was not an act of aggression, and more of the same kind of nonsense. They ask you to call black white, and vice versa.

SEREBRIAKOVA: You would not be able to give up your convictions even provisionally?

FEINBERGS: If all men gave up their convictions, Doctor, we would still be in the Stone Age.

SEREBRIAKOVA: But we are living in the 20th century, and that's precisely why one must be more flexible.

FEINBERG: But not to the detriment of one's conscience, Doctor.

NADJAROV: Victor Isakovitch, men are not diagnosed as sick because they hold this or that opinion or because they have committed a crime. They are given clinical treatment because they were already ill, and they are re-

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quired to submit to treatment until they stop being a danger to society. As for knowing whether they are sick or not, that's the business of us psychiatrists. . . .

FEINBERG: (*turning to General Timofeev, who had come in some minutes earlier*): Look, Nicolas Nicolaievitch, you call Grigorenko your friend. "My friend, General Grigorenko. . . ." But you are generals in different branches of the services, Nicolas Nicolaievitch! You, *you* decide men's destinies, but the destiny of Pyotr Grigorenko depends on an ignorant attendant who can, if he likes, forbid him to go to the toilet—excuse me for speaking of such things. And now Grigorenko is suffering from a bladder inflammation. Such is the fate of a man who shed so much blood for his country.

NADJAROV: Let us not talk about politics. Each of us has his own opinions in that area.

FEINBERG: I'm not questioning you about your opinions. In our country, that's dangerous. But—

BELAEV: That is an insulting, contemptible remark. . . .

SEREBRIAKOVA: Why do you refuse to eat?

FEINBERG: My friend Borissov and I submitted a statement about that to the administration. You are familiar with its contents, of course. In it, we say that we will agree to discuss this question only if both of us are present.

TIMOFEEV: You have taken up with an anti-Semite.

FEINBERG: Nicolas Nicolaievitch, again you're mistaken. The anti-Semite is Tchernychev. It is Borissov and I who are conducting the hunger strike. As far as Tchernychev is concerned, we are demanding a stop to the injections he has been subjected to as punishment for the hunger strike he had undertaken—one which was entirely justified.

NADJAROV: They do not authorize you to see a lawyer?

FEINBERG: That's just it. We are held to be bereft of our mental faculties. Borissov, for example, who's a man of completely sound mind, has been considered sick simply because he signed a group letter addressed to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in connection with the arrest of Grigorenko and Gabai. The other signers haven't been bothered, as it happens, but Borissov has been denied permission to talk with his lawyer. The lawyer was told that the state of Borissov's health made such a talk impossible. . . .

SEREBRIAKOVA: You refuse to eat?

FEINBERG: They force-feed me through the nose. Here a hunger strike is allowed for only four days.

SEREBRIAKOVA: How do you spend your time?

FEINBERG: Exercises and a cold shower three times a day. All the rest of the time I spend reading. English, German, history.

BELAEV: You say that some people spend 13 to 15 years here. Can you cite some names?

FEINBERG: I'd be glad to. Lyssak spent 13 years here: he refused to give up his convictions. Kogan's been here for 17 years.

SEREBRIAKOVA: Lyssak! But he really is sick.

FEINBERG: For all practical purposes, he's a perfectly well man.

NADJAROV: Victor Isakovitch, we have listened to you. We are going to verify your statements and investigate the facts you have mentioned.

FEINBERG: I should like to believe you.

Two Days Later **II**

DOCTOR: Let's talk frankly. You made us out to be monsters. I'm going to speak frankly too.

FEINBERG: I prefer to speak frankly with my friends and no less so with my enemies. I'm always in favor of frankness.

DOCTOR: You talk of things you know absolutely nothing about. You must admit you have no knowledge whatever of psychiatry. How would you take it upon yourself to determine whether a man is mentally sick or sound? By the color of his hair, his eyes?

FEINBERG: If I know a man well, even without being professionally competent in the field of psychiatry I will be able to determine whether he is really sick or not.

DOCTOR: Your judgment is superficial. You are an intellectually abnormal man.

FEINBERG: You mean intellectually retarded?

DOCTOR: No, the opposite. You are too evolved. You are intellectually abnormal. A

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normal man can make an erroneous judgment, in which case it's a simple matter of error. But an intellectually abnormal man can come to the same false judgment as a result of his illness. And as for determining whether it is a matter of error or of illness, that's the business of us psychiatrists.

FEINBERG: I venture to hope that a man as intellectually developed as you will be able to explain to me wherein my intellectual inadequacy lies. . . .

DOCTOR: Are you going to eat?

FEINBERG: You know one of the conditions we made was that all discussion of the hunger strike must be held in the presence of both of us.

DOCTOR: You laid down unrealizable conditions. We cannot judge you. On the other hand, for us to set a sick man free to let him die in freedom is equally impossible. Probably we will end up sending you to different hospitals. . . .

Look, you have been examined by the commission. It is a very, very highly placed commission (*he bobs his head respectfully*), so highly placed that there is none above it. Do you remember the members' names? I want to check your memory.

FEINBERG: Serebriakova, Belaev, and Nadjarov—or Podjarov, I'm sorry I've forgotten which.

DOCTOR: You see? The ranking member, and you've forgotten his name. Well, this commission has come to a decision in your case. You will not meet with it again. You see, you make rapid judgments about things you know nothing of. The administration of neuroleptics has brought relief to a great many sick people, yet you consider this type of treatment harmful. You yourself do not need neuroleptics. They will not cure you. It has been decided to leave you alone with yourself.

FEINBERG: And what should I do alone with myself?

DOCTOR: All of your writing materials and so forth will be taken away. You will be given a chance to remain for some period of time entirely alone, to reflect and come to the point where you will make a healthy decision. When a man arrives at a well-considered, sound decision, he ceases being socially dangerous and he is set free.

FEINBERG: It's never occurred to you that a man who is deprived of the physical and mental activity he's accustomed to can go crazy?

DOCTOR: That is something that never happens. Illness is always an internal process that does not depend on external conditions. . . . Do you know what the man whose name you have forgotten said about you? When you went out, he said, "What a charming man! And what a pity he is so seriously ill!"

Translated from French by ADRIENNE FOULKE □

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David Denby

Guerrillas Without Ideas

In *The Sleeping-Car Murders,* Costa-Gavras's exciting if rather conventional first movie, the hero was a Parisian detective desperately trying to solve a "perfect" murder. With the hindsight provided by three films, we can see that for Costa-Gavras the detective's desire for truth was not merely a convention required by a popular movie genre; getting at the criminal, violent, hidden reality and bringing it to light is the moral passion animating all of Costa-Gavras's work. Each of his political films has been an investigation, a dissolution of the fraudulent official version of some great public event. The director is both a muckraking journalist, raging at the lies that kill, and a quasi-Marxist analyst, tracing the larger patterns of corruption and power that make the lies necessary. In *Z* we followed the exploits of a zealous investigating magistrate (played by Trintignant) as he penetrated the shadow world of fascist manipulations during the assassination of Lambrakis in Salonika in 1963; *The Confession* used Artur London's memoirs to expose the truth behind the Slansky show trials, demonstrating with extraordinary precision the steps by which a stolidly idealistic Czech Communist was forced to make a false confession of treason; and now, in *State of Siege,* Costa-Gavras examines the case of Dan A. Mitrione, a "generous American" and official of AID who was kidnapped and executed by guerrillas in Uruguay in 1970—a man who was given a state funeral as a friend of the Uruguayan people, and whose actual job was to teach the police how to use provocation and torture to suppress political insurgents on the Left.

At this point the notion of politics as a nonstop investigation makes a lot of sense. For us, too, fraud appears to be the essence of modern government; increasingly, the political vocation consists of a willingness to penetrate official lies and deceptions. The muckraker and federal attorney are no longer merely our surrogates, the men who look into the dirty stuff while the rest of us go about our business; instead, they are men acting professionally in ways that we all must act simply to exist as citizens. Each of us has become an investigator.

Nevertheless, despite Costa-Gavras's stance of skepticism, his tableaux of political life are marked by a certain artistic and personal naiveté. The world set out in these movies is totally without ambiguity, consisting as it does of only two sets of phenomena: lies and corruption on the one hand, truth and honor on the other. Perhaps Costa-Gavras thinks that anything less clear-cut would be an evasion, but an artist knows better. For Costa-Gavras lies are apparently something very dangerous but also quite easy to penetrate, whereas the truth is palpable and irreducible. I don't imagine he suffers any doubts about his own ability to possess the truth or to use it, but so far Costa-Gavras has only displayed a journalist's truth (nothing to be sneezed at), not an artist's.

The world of his films is also prepsychological and rather impersonal. Motivation and character are completely beside the point, and the director's passion to expose and illuminate extends only to overt political acts; he has no interest in the *personality's* lies and evasions, not even as they pertain to political belief. His characters are seen in the single dimension of their political acts and opinions, and as far as we know, they never suffer a moment's hesitation, never contradict themselves, never stop to reflect or to justify what they are doing. Per-

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haps a certain degree of character streamlining is necessary in movies of this sort, but it's still a major artistic weakness. Even the Communist deputy in *The Confession,* a character who completely dominates the movie, is seen entirely from the outside as a man to whom a terrible injustice is being done. We never get a peek at Artur London's inner life, nor an answer to questions about him that probably interest us more than his specific fate, such as, How did this obviously decent man sustain his idealism and his faith in Communism during his apprenticeship, in the thirties, in Moscow and Spain? How could he have remained a Communist even after his own imprisonment and conviction— is he merely stupid, or is some sort of complex self-deception at work in him? For the purposes of Costa-Gavras's films, a man and his "position" are indissoluble, and crises of self-integration never occur; as a result *The Confession* lacked the resonance, the illumination of personal experience that would have made it great.

IN *The Confession* Yves Montand did his best to anchor London in flesh and blood, to release him from a purely historical function, and he does the same with Mitrione in *State of Siege.* God knows, Franco Solinas's screenplay doesn't help him very much. In the Solinas/Costa-Gavras conception, Mitrione (called Santore in the movie) was a classic 20th-century killer, a man who was good to his family and friends and fellow workers and who went to his desk every day and placidly consigned people to agony and death. Yet apart from a single outburst of ritual anti-Communism we aren't given a clue as to what makes this American tick. Once the Tupamaros (the Uruguayan urban guerrillas) have captured him and begun their interrogation, the movie relentlessly piles up the data that will justify his execution; he never has a chance, dramatically speaking, and although we may be convinced he should die, we may still want more of a character and more of a struggle. Montand's presence gives the film what little moral density and ambiguity it has. Since we are used to seeing Montand as the man of the Left, we may at first be puzzled by his role in *State of Siege.* Later, our familiar satisfaction with the heroic gravity of his face and chin and shoulders reinforces the paradox that a humanly attractive man may be despicable, too, and affords his death a tragic dignity it woudn't have had with a less likable actor.

But not only political character is irrelevant to Costa-Gavras; he's not very interested in political ideas either. Take the Tupamaros. Is it naive for a moviegoer to want to know what these middle-class, educated, glamorous young leftists stand for? What they will do once they have built a strong movement or taken power? What do they imagine the relationship to be between the terrorism they practice and the more humane society they claim to want? Again, we aren't given a clue. At one point Mitrione/Santore says to his young interrogator: "Just what kind of a civilization do you think you're fighting for?" But the answer is no more than a sporting riposte: "Let's say a civilization where men like you would not exist."

For Costa-Gavras the virtue of the Tupamaros is apparently guaranteed by the relative humanity and sophistication of their techniques, and here one is inclined to suspect him of special pleading. How could the audience fail to love the handsome, disciplined young revolutionaries as they gaily "expropriate" a bunch of cars for the kidnapping? How could we not appreciate their exquisite politeness— gallantry even—toward a man they hold in their power, a man they know is a torturer? We never see the actual execution (a rather cowardly omission), but we gather that they perform it without excitement or the pleasures of revenge. Thus the Tupamaros are ideal revolutionaries, revolutionaries you would gladly invite for dinner. A bolder director (like Godard) might have dramatized the agonizing and comic discrepancy between their personal sweetness and the desperation of their acts. A more honest director (like Pontecorvo) would have shown that political murder, no matter how justified, gets sloppy and vicious, that there's no way to make terrorism clean and gallant. It was an essential part of the moral authority of Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* (also written by Franco Solinas—in a better moment) that the Arab terrorists, who were clearly in the right, were shown to be just as ruthless as their French oppressors. But here, Solinas and Costa-Gavras want us to believe that these young revolutionaries who oppose

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Edited by Irving Howe

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imperialism, oligarchy, and torture with a terrorism of their own are *nicer as people* than the fat-necked policemen who do Mitrione's bidding.

THE *look* of political violence and the how-to-do-it aspects are clearly what interest Costa-Gavras the most—how an interrogation is conducted, how someone is arrested or shot down in the street or assassinated from a roof top. He's a master at staging this stuff, and *State of Siege* has its share of brilliantly realistic moments. He's perfected a style of cinematic exposition—short, explosive scene-fragments gathered together in rhythmic units—that allows him to pack more action and information into his films than almost anyone else. However, I think he overdoes the speedup business in *State of Siege*. In order to construct a dossier on the effects of imperialism on a Latin-American country, he recreates an entire society—police, parliament, revolutionaries, newspapermen, etc.—and with overpowering emphasis throws tons of material at us—testimony, speeches, reporters' questions, fascist brutalities, etc. It's more than anyone can absorb at one sitting, and since we aren't given the time to sort it out or think about it, we begin to blank out. This is a long, noisy exhaustingly garrulous movie, with a relentless "public" focus, and it finally becomes obtuse. Once we've absorbed the shocker—that an American agent has been sent through AID to teach right-wing governments how to use torture—we want a little time to think about it and look at the man doing it, but Costa-Gavras rushes us off to the next bit of evidence.

I'm convinced that Costa-Gavras sincerely hates authoritarianism both on the Left (*The Confession*) and on the Right (*Z* and *State of Siege*), but I'm beginning to wonder if it isn't the only style of political action that suits his temperament as a film-maker. Perhaps he lacks the interest or the imagination to recreate a "normal" politics, a politics without violence and fraud. Given the nature of the modern state, we probably shouldn't be surprised if this is the case; still, it would be a sour irony if this antiauthoritarian were drawn to authoritarianism again and again because it's the only subject that allows him to make an exciting movie. □

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Richard Robbins

Remembrance of Things Past

SDS, by Kirkpatrick Sale. New York: Random House. 752 pp. $15.

The rise, fall, and further fall of Students for a Democratic Society during the sixties is more than another melancholy footnote to the failed radical movements in America. While it lasted, as the centerpiece of the New Left in the universities, SDS played a catalytic role—though never a central one—in the resistance to the criminal war in Vietnam, in the civil rights struggle, in the defense of the ghetto poor, and in the attack on the evils of corporate capitalism. This dynamic organization was able to command the support of thousands of students outraged by the garrison society and disenchanted with liberal reform—though in between crises the national leaders floundered and the "masses" of students fell away; the latter were committed to protest and change but not necessarily to SDS's version of what was to be done.

In the end, bereft of most of its student support, bypassed in the national student strike over Cambodia/Kent State/Jackson State, alienated from the black militants, riddled by a factional war with the Maoist young ideologues of the Progressive Labor party (PL), exhausted organizationally, and hounded by public hysteria and the Nixon-Mitchell spies and informers, SDS went down. By 1970 neither the band of underground guerrillas, the Weathermen, with their pathetic effort to bomb "Amerika" into submission, nor the public shell, the hybrid PL–SDS, with its ideological lock-stepping, mattered one way or the other.

Still, it would be small-minded not to pay tribute to the generous spirit that informed the radicalism of the young people of SDS, at least in the early stages. And with the advantage of hindsight, we can draw some lessons from the experience of SDS and all the other New Left groups of the sixties.

KIRKPATRICK SALE'S *SDS* is a meticulously detailed and thorough account of SDS's transit from a civil rights, antiwar, reform group of students to a beleaguered and isolated revolutionary sect. A vast amount of material from the chaotic SDS files, saved from the FBI at the last minute by the Wisconsin Historical Society, is deployed in alliterative categories: Reorganization (1960–62), Reform (1962–65), Resistance (1965–68), Revolution (1968–70). Each of the four R's subdivides into chapters titled after the four seasons. The secondary literature has been combed, and there are sharp portraits of the leaders—Tom Hayden, Carl Oglesby, Rennie Davis, Bernardine Dohrn, and others. But the meat and strength of *SDS* are the hundreds of pages on virtually every meeting, manifesto, march, and mobilization (to continue the alliteration) ever conducted by SDS. All this takes wing from a symbolic prefatory note on the explosion on West Eleventh Street in 1970 when three young SDS-Weathermen "marked the end of an era" by misreading their technical manuals and blowing themselves to pieces. And at the end there is an appendix, "The Roots, 1905–1960," a sketchy and superficial summary of the line of socialist youth groups, from the Intercollegiate Socialist Society through the American Student Union to the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), to which SDS fell heir. Never mind. Between overblown preface and thin appendix, Sale provides a

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crisply written, month-by-month description of SDS. This is a valuable text in social journalism.

Here we have in one place the raw material for a later history—the early alliance with SLID and the gradual disengagement from the liberal and "tired old radical" movement; *the Port Huron Statement,* a brave vision of a new community inspired by "participatory democracy"; the fumbling, eventually disastrous effort to organize the poor in the cities; the gradual "radicalization" of SDS as the war intensified; the assault on university structure as agent of the corporate elite and the "busts" at Columbia, Harvard, and other campuses; draft resistance as prelude to a politics of the streets; and ultimately an inevitable turning inward, away from any significant links with students or workers, with the predictable fantasies of "bringing the system down" by "trashing" downtown Chicago or Harvard Square in glorious "days of action" and by mindless "invasions" of local high schools.

At the end of the decade nothing was more antithetical to the Port Huron Statement than SDS itself. The conflict with PL had produced an organizational shambles. How ironic that SDS, which prided itself on contempt for "tired old radicals" assertedly obsessed with an "exclusionary" policy of containing the Stalinist threat from within, should retreat in panic from a comparable assault from within by the PLers, the Stalinists of the sixties. The leaders of SDS wanted to banish history, to make a revolutionary "fresh start" in the style of Castro. Here, however, at the end, is a comment by Carl Davidson on the SDS-PL conflict made in Ann Arbor in December 1968. Davidson, one of the last of the "prairie power" radicals to be swept aside in the SDS-PL debacle, might almost be writing about 1938:

> The chairman than moved into a fund-raising session, traditionally a time of merrymaking and song . . . while members are emptying their pockets of cash. This time the two opposing camps delivered volleys of chants back and forth. "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" came from the national collective supporters, answered by "Mao Mao Mao Tse-tung" from the other side. When someone started singing "The Worker's Flag is Deepest Red," the student worker alliance side of the room came up with "Don't use the red flag against the red flag" and "Defeat SDS's Khrushchev." The final blow came when the singing of "Solidarity Forever" was interrupted by the chant "Defeat False Unity." After that, everyone went home.

SDS contains all the details and has all the events; but journalism is not history, text is not context, and Sale's book is deficient in general interpretation. In the first place, assessing the "legacy" of SDS, he argues for the centrality of the organization in the tumultuous social changes of the sixties. This is a wildly inflated claim, confusing SDS with the protest movement as a whole. Sale writes realistically enough about specific aspects of the SDS program. "SDS was not the shaper and shaker of the draft resistance movement." The high school politicization program (No Class Today; No Class Rule Tomorrow!) is described as an "abject failure." Sale is acute on SDS's miscalculation of its student constituency.

> To students just beginning to be aware of their own radicalization and their potential role as the intelligentsia in an American left, SDS offered the wisdom that the only really important agents for social change were the industrial workers, or the ghetto blacks, or the Third World revolutionaries. For college students who swarmed into chapter meetings ready to take on their administrations for any number of grievances, SDS provided an analysis which emphasized . . . dropping out and destroying universities.

How, then, can Sale possibly conclude that SDS "shaped a generation, revived an American left, transformed political possibilities, opened the way to changes in the national life that would have been unthought of in the fifties"?

SDS ALSO LACKS sophistication about the structure of American society. A reader could well emerge from this book with a picture of SDS in one corner and the military-industrial complex in the other—and nothing in between! For Sale the democratic Left is a joke, the word "liberal" a synonym for "hypocrite," the trade union movement George Meany, the white-collar population a blank. Tough-minded as he is in describing the internal life of SDS, he then takes over uncritically SDS's view of the world around it. Now grant immediately the obvious: the degree of corporate power, the corruption of the war in Vietnam, the frightening position of the military elite, and the

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erosion of civil rights and civil liberties. But it is sheer abdication to think that the System is impregnable, that totalitarianism (Amerika) is already fixed in place. And it makes no sense to write off a large proportion of the population that is supposed to form the very foundation of the new society. You cannot write a history of SDS in which the organization is hermetically sealed off from the society, simply because you believe the society is not really worth writing about.

Sale knows better. At one point, commenting on the student movement of the thirties, the ASU, he observes that among its members was Jerry Voorhis, who went on to liberalism, was elected to the House, and subsequently lost this seat to Richard Nixon. "Had he been more adept at conventional mainstream politics [he] might have spared us the presidential fate we now endure." This is one of Sale's characteristic asides, misdirected at a humane and able liberal who was tough enough to get reelected several times before he was defeated by Nixon. Still, unintentionally Sale demonstrates my point. If "mainstream politics" were nothing but a national charade behind which the power elite remains entrenched, then it would presumably make no difference whether we were spared Nixon or not. And if mainstream politics might make some difference, even if without producing those profound changes we would all want to see, then dismissing the trade unions and congressional elections is self-defeating. Raising the minimum wage and voting down the lunacy of a supersonic transport scarcely involve Resistance, let alone Revolution. As acts of Reorganization and Reform, however, no socialist should reject them for reasons of "purity."

SDS fell apart not only because of savage repression, but also because its leaders were unable to convert a Marxist critique of the new industrial state into an organization with sufficient power in the universities to build a student base, with sufficient power to attract at least some strategic working-class and white-collar support. That demanded—it still does—not a renunciation of socialist integrity but of sectarian "purity." Not Revolution but a revolutionary fervor in behalf of a democractic ethos directed, at least in part, toward "mainstream politics." □

Erazim V. Kohák

A Superb Mind

COLLECTED ESSAYS, by George Lichtheim. New York: Viking Press. 492 pp. $15.

George Lichtheim fitted ill the technological age whose coming he augured. He was, genuinely, a writer: one of the rare breed whose craft is *saying forth,* transforming unwieldy reality into the freedom of the word. His occasional essays are the essential Lichtheim: brilliantly, often scathingly evoking a shock of recognition.

That recognition is most direct as Lichtheim hammers away at our fundamental experience and his fundamental insight, the rise of the managed society, which no longer happens in the margins of productive processes but rather is done. Society has become an act rather than an event. Not owners and toilers, but technicians who neither toil nor own now manage both toil and ownership and constitute its pivot. The idle drones and righteous toilers of yesteryear's rhetoric, together with their dialectical conflict, become the object rather than the subject of history. With Lichtheim we return to the classical question—shall the managers be responsible to those in whose behalf they ostensibly manage or only to their own ideological conscience?

Lichtheim's keenly honed critique of the prophets of revolution "from Lenin to Mao Tse-tung" articulates our own uncomfortable, groping awareness that in the new context the revolt of the toilers becomes largely irrelevant. No revolution is needed to bring about a planned society—technology is doing that in any case. The sole effect of revolution is to bring managers to power by brute force and thereby render them as irresponsible as the barons who claimed to rule by right of conquest. The task, Lichtheim insists is, to forge the practical means of making managers responsible.

In light of Lichtheim's pragmatic, antidogmatic stance, his preoccupation with Marxist ideology might well seem puzzling. Yet here, too, Lichtheim, articulates a common experi-

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ence. We have all been nurtured by the Marxian age, half unwilling and half unable to break its spell in spite of the cairn of corpses rising on the Master's grave. Writing of "Marx and Beyond," Lichtheim traces a slow, groping retreat. We discarded Stalin in the name of Leninism, only to discover that Lenin had already transformed Marxism into the orthodoxy of an empire. More recently, the "mature" Marx has been charged with muddying the unsullied idealism of the "young" Marx.

Lichtheim himself places the fall from grace between Marx and Engels—Marx is the visionary, Engels the vulgarizer. His persistent search for the once and future Marxism is based on a clear recognition of the inadequacy of positivism as a tool of social analysis. Lichtheim turns to German idealism not out of love for holism in the 19th century but in the conviction that social phenomena must be not only explained but also understood in terms of meaning as well as cause. He turns to Marx specifically in the conviction that in Marx German idealism provides an alternative to reductive positivism.

ONCE I had occasion to challenge that dichotomy with the suggestion that men like Masaryk, Husserl, or Weber provide an alternative. Recognition of intrinsic, meaningful structures in experience, I suggested, can be a source of categories that are empirical without being reductive. Lichtheim's response surprised me. It was not self-assured and unambiguous, but almost groping. Husserl and his followers, he said finally, were simply not available because they had never explicated the sociological applications of phenomenology.

As usual, Lichtheim was right. But rereading his brilliant, perceptive thrusts in this book, I cannot escape the impression that in his reinterpretation of Marx, Lichtheim sought to achieve precisely a social critique that would retain the particularity of the human subject without falling into a reductive positivism. It is a moot question whether such a critique can be sought in Marx, but the quest itself is legitimate and urgent. Lichtheim's *Collected Essays* deserve to be read, not only as a key to Lichtheim's thought, but as a key to Lichtheim's quest. Most of all they deserve to be read for the clarity of perception that was characteristic of this superb mind. □

George Eckstein

Road to Vietnam

ROOTS OF WAR, by Richard J. Barnet. New York: Atheneum. 350 pp. $10.00. Paper, Pelican. $1.95.

In his latest book, Richard Barnet, codirector of the Institute for Policy Studies, continues his examination of U.S. foreign policy, specifically "the roots of a generation of war" and the forces in U.S. society that have pushed this country into a series of military interventions. His premise is that only deeply entrenched forces would make the country persist in the disastrous Vietnam policy long beyond the point when it became evident that the economic, social, and moral costs far outweighed any possible advantage in international power relations. The book is written lucidly and concisely. Barnet's analysis of the theories of imperialism by Hobson, Lenin, Kautsky, and Schumpeter is first-rate. He avoids moralizing and cheap polemics, and he usually stays away from sweeping simplifications.

Barnet is more persuasive than some of his revisionist colleagues when he states his case for the proposition that the war in Vietnam, while not the result of a "conspiracy," is not simply the result of a "mistake." He sees it, rather, as the logical outcome of the principles of an interventionist foreign policy initially developed under Truman-Acheson, and continued with varying degrees of intensity by the four succeeding administrations. He argues that this policy of containing Communist power and securing regimes friendly to American economic expansion grew out of the tremendous accretion of American power that occurred during the two World Wars and that contains ever-present "roots of war." He then proceeds to trace the policy to specific influences within American society—notably the establishment of a national security bureaucracy, the expansionist tendencies inherent in a capitalist economy oriented toward unceasing growth, and the need and growing possibilities for the manipulation of public opinion.

IN THE FIRST and perhaps most interesting part of his book, Barnet examines the rise and

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the composition of the national security bureaucracy, its recruitment from and interchangeability with a small circle of (largely WASP) Eastern and Midwestern corporation executives, top military brass, foundation heads, and faculties of a handful of universities. This predominantly conservative group has only narrow international contacts and little understanding of other classes and of the forces of rebellion and revolution in the world.

It is from this closed circle, centered around the Council on Foreign Relations, that the top managers of our national security establishment have been recruited:

> Between 1940 and 1967 . . . all the first- and second-level posts in a huge national security bureaucracy were held by fewer than four hundred individuals who rotate through a variety of key posts. . . . seventy of the ninety-one people who have held the very top jobs—Secretaries of Defense and State, Secretaries of the three services, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Director of the CIA—have all been businessmen, lawyers for businessmen, and investment bankers.

This inbred circle of men (hardly a woman among them) has tended to co-opt only minds that will not seriously question their basic concept of the national interest. At most, such critics as George Ball and, in his later years, George Kennan were "assigned the roles of devil's advocate." But, with few recent exceptions, no one was heard who questioned the basic assumptions of this foreign policy.

All vital information reaches the president through the screen of the national security managers, who filter out unpleasant facts or dissident thoughts. Barnet gives vivid examples; but in his zeal to attack "Camelot," he gives insufficient credit to John F. Kennedy's attempts to listen to other voices. This bureaucracy, moreover, prefers to deal in so-called facts and to work with mechanistic motivational theories—facts and motivations that can readily be computerized for the "games of options,"which then form the basis of concrete decisions.

Aided by a "cover language" used to conceal unpalatable facts and methods (e.g., "pacification," "protective reaction," "defoliation") or to manipulate public opinion, the bureaucracy ends up in self-delusion and increasing estrangement from reality. It takes a shattering event such as the Tet offensive of early 1968 to break through this protective screen. Barnet makes some valid observations about this "need not to know" disagreeable matters—a phenomenon that, incidentally, should make Americans more cautious when condemning all Germans for "not knowing" about the extermination of the Jews (an action that was far more thoroughly hidden from public knowledge through terror and information control).

IN THE SECOND PART of his book, Barnet examines the "political economy of expansionism," and the question whether and to what extent "the evolving American economic system—late twentieth-century capitalism—is responsible for America's expansionist foreign policy and wars." In this context he assigns, I believe, too important a role to the "American Business Creed," the mythology still based on old entrepreneurial concepts.

On balance, Barnet seems to see today's economic expansionism primarily as a strong supportive factor in foreign policy, and major military and foreign-policy decisions as mainly dictated by strategic considerations, erroneous interpretations (the domino theory), and fallacious historical parallels (Munich). Barnet recognizes in particular the folly of those neo-Marxists who explain the Vietnam policy by citing the business interests of Coca-Cola, construction companies, and oil.

Nor does Barnet accept the simplistic application of Leninist theses on imperialism. In the different climate of present-day managerial capitalism it is not so much greed as overemphasis on unlimited growth that leads to expansionism. But precisely because the undeveloped countries, formerly the major objects of U.S. expansionism, have in the course of their decolonization become both extremely unstable and more impoverished, the greater part of U.S. investment abroad has lately been going into the industrialized countries of the Western world as a safer and in the long run more profitable place. Barnet is vaguely aware that this trend partly invalidates his arguments connecting the "roots of war" with the economic system. Indeed, he views the most recent form of American economic expansionism, the multinational corporation, with surprising benevolence as a powerful counterforce to the government, and as a potentially positive force

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toward an international organization of the world.

WITH BARNET (and others before him), I believe that a redirection of investment, away from the production of goods and toward the improvement of social services and the quality of the natural and the human environment, would go far toward blunting the expansionist tendencies of American capital. This would imply a changed concept of growth—growth no longer seen exclusively in terms of production of goods and personal services, but also in what Barnet calls "human growth." Such a shift toward social services would absorb substantial capital investment at home and also employment for many who have been displaced by agricultural and industrial technology. The necessary redirection of resources, while requiring a further increase in public functions, could be effected by a reform of taxation and similar measures "theoretically possible within the framework of the present American economic system." Barnet recognizes this possibility, and it is largely a question of semantics if elsewhere in his book he sees no chance for significant change in foreign policy without "structural change" in the American society.

There is another contradiction in Barnet's recognition that, on the one hand, "sheer power and size [give a country] enormous advantages in dealing with weaker countries"—and, on the other hand, his pooh-poohing the fear of power vacuums into which the Soviet Union might have rushed if unchecked. One of his major premises in attacking the containment policy and the Cold War ideology is his low estimate of Russian expansionist potential after World War II, and of West European weakness at this crucial time. It is easy to be sanguine about these matters after the fact, especially if one has not actually experienced them. Undoubtedly, American policy all too soon became frozen, and therefore could not explore alternate opportunities. But the handling of the Tito defection suggests that this rigidity was not inevitable.

Here we come up against the fact that, to some extent, each successive generation is a prisoner of the key experiences during its politically formative years, such as the trauma of Nazism and Stalinism for some and the trauma of Vietnam for others. Perhaps an awareness of this factor could be the first step toward mutual understanding.

When it comes down to what we now need—a reorientation from the values of blind material growth to those of "quality of life," and a shifting of resources and of power in the society—the generation gap becomes less significant. When it comes down to what is *possible*, Barnet's propositions are rather modest, too: reduction of military bureaucracy, reassertion of congressional prerogatives in foreign affairs, limitation of presidential power to commit troops abroad, opening the process of decision-making to public scrutiny and debate, redirection of investments toward social tasks, gradual redistribution of incomes and wealth. The magnitude of McGovern's defeat, of course, has shown that even such a modest-sounding program implies a rather profound realignment of power in our society. On the other hand, the very fact of McGovern's nomination has revealed that such a realignment is not altogether impossible. □

Uncle Joe's Nephew

THE ESSENTIAL STALIN: MAJOR THEORETICAL WRITINGS, 1905-1952, edited by Bruce Franklin. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books. 511 pp. $2.95.

The editor of this volume, a Maoist of the California school, announces that the people of China, Vietnam, Korea, and Albania "consider Stalin one of the great heroes of modern history." This might, he concedes, be the result of brain-washing, "except that the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union, who knew Stalin best, share this view." (An assurance as to the people's opinions in the five above-mentioned countries that rests on the Bruce Franklin Opinion Poll.) He also declares that "the nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany . . . was

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actually one of the most brilliant strategic moves of Stalin's life." He defends the Moscow trials "by facing the facts that an anti-Soviet conspiracy did exist within the Party." He believes that Stalin's *Marxism and Linguistics* is a "major theoretical work." He knows that during Stalin's forced collectivization "needless violence" occurred, not, however, as a result of government policy but because "it was the hour of Russia's peasant masses." Unfortunately, after Stalin died, the Soviet Union fell prey to "a new capitalist class," but for this Stalin cannot be held responsible, since Mao has praised Stalin as a "genius" and that settles it.

If the people at Anchor Books had wanted a reputable scholar to edit Stalin's works and not commit the blunders and idiocies of the present volume, there were hundreds of people, along the whole spectrum of political opinion, who could have done the job. But if they were looking for a buffoon to praise one of the two greatest mass murderers of our century, they found their man. I. H. □

Joseph S. Himes

A Black Critique

BLACK EDUCATION: MYTHS AND TRAGEDIES, by Thomas Sowell. New York: David McKay. 338 pp. $6.95.

This book is a highly personal critique of black education in the United States during recent years. Written by an articulate and competent black economist, it draws heavily on his limited experiences as a student in a few black schools and as a professor in one black and several white universities. In the end, Sowell's personality (as it comes through in his pages) may make a stronger impression than the facts and arguments that he marshalls.

Black Education starts with an autobiographical sketch, from its author's humble beginnings in Gastonia, North Carolina, through graduation *Magna cum Laude* from Harvard, then a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, to teaching at Howard, Rutgers, Cornell, Brandeis, and UCLA. Sowell then explores, and hopes he explodes, three education-linked myths about blacks. The discussion here is about black students in white universities. Then comes a section entitled "Special Problems and Special Myths," dealing with the education of blacks in public schools and "black" colleges. The last two chapters present conclusions and proposals.

The main argument of this book is that everywhere blacks are badly educated. The major object of attack is the mismanaged special programs (particularly so-called black studies programs) for black students in northern white universities. Mismanagement and exploitation result, avers Sowell, from recruiting and admission policies that discriminate against bright, in favor of "authentic ghetto-type" black students, and thrive upon campus intrigue, manufactured myths, current fads and white sentimentality. The unprepared ghetto students flunk out and the bright ones are neglected and unsupported. Sowell also discusses black high schools, black colleges, and the testing bureaucracy as other agencies in the under- and inappropriate education of blacks. This condition harms not only blacks but the nation as a whole. Professor Sowell proposes pre-college training centers, which would overlap both high school work and the work of special remedial and compensatory programs in college, and a special institute for advanced study, which would feature "intellectual excellence" for black people.

One cannot read the autobiographical sketch without being thrilled by its account of determination in the face of what for a lesser person would have been insurmountable obstacles —or without being turned off by its persistent flavor of self-righteous heroism. But if we disengage from our personal response to Sowell's unembarrassed egotism, his account of attending big-city schools and great universities can say something to us about the nature and quality of prejudice in American society. In this subtle labyrinth of half-concealed hostility and discrimination, many a minority child, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Italian as well as black, has

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been lost even before he got started. It takes a child of extraordinary insight and strength (like little Sowell) to perceive, oppose, and overcome these obstacles.

Yet this kind of black success story can have unanticipated and unfortunate consequences. Some people may simply dub it a self-serving fairy tale and dismiss it. Others may see in it an exemplar of the new spirit of "self-reliance" being fostered in the land. Still others may see Sowell's triumph as proof that blacks possess the resources to "cope" with their problems, and that therefore massive public support is no longer needed.

Professor Sowell's treatment of the racial myths is more cogent. His critique of the paired myths of "the black middle classes" and the "authentic poor" is significant. As Sowell points out, the stereotype of the selfish, insensitive, and snobbish black middle classes has made it fashionable in some quarters to attack black professionals, business leaders, and intellectuals. To attack the black middle classes becomes a way of demonstrating that one is on the side of the "authentic" poor. At the same time, a curious offshoot of this myth is to equate intellectual competence with middle-class status. The myth has not only militated against bright young blacks who were also poor, it has not only supported sundry frauds in the name of liberalism; it has also driven a rift into the black community. Solidarity has thus been weakened and an important leadership resource wasted.

Black Education is well written, well reasoned and well documented. The ridicule, irony, and sarcasm are biting, but usually manage to avoid the vindictive exhibitionism that sometimes disfigures this kind of book.

Professor Sowell attended black schools in his native Gastonia, North Carolina, until he was nine, when his family moved to Harlem. There he attended a local public school for a few years before getting transferred to one of the city's elite schools. After high school he spent one year at Howard University. This is the total of his experience in black education, save for the year he taught at Howard. The rest of his education occurred in white institutions, elite New York high schools, Harvard College, Columbia, and the University of Chicago.

The upshot is that Dr. Sowell doesn't really know very much about black education, except as he has read about it. Apparently he did not make a "survey" of black public schools and colleges as preparation for writing this book. One result is that his conclusions about black education, while in the main correct and often insightful, tend to be either marginal to major issues or based on narrow perspective. Professor Sowell cannot speak with personal authority about education in a big-city black high school in the Deep South or about growing up educationally in one of the black colleges. The "myths and tragedies" of black education are not, indeed for a long time will not be, restricted to the plight of the bright black student in the northern white university.

One may read *Black Education* and still be tormented by such issues as de- or re-segregated schools; the future of the unendowed, private black colleges; the fate of the average graduates of these colleges; the rising tide of higher educational expectations in the black world and the shrinking base of public support for poor students in poor black colleges. The question "Who shall be educated?" is still crucial in the black community. And the answer is not Sowell's version of DuBois's "talented tenth."

Professor Sowell's other difficulty is a double restriction of attention. On the one hand, he is concerned mainly with bright black students in northern white universities. And on the other, he is talking about northeastern universities—Rutgers, Cornell, Columbia, Brandeis, and Harvard. Sometimes it is difficult, if not impossible, to see the "myths and tragedies" examined in this book as relevant to southern public schools and black colleges.

In American society black education is the setting of a series of myths and tragedies that help to keep blacks locked into minority status. This book aims to expose and explode some of them. For this reason, whatever its shortcomings, it is worth reading. □

PAUL GOODMAN: any information, especially letters and personal memories or stories, for a biography. All copies will be returned.

Raymond Rosenthal, c/o Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 19 Union Square West, New York, New York 10003.

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Edward Grossman

Dylan's Odyssey

WRITINGS AND DRAWINGS, by Bob Dylan. New York: Knopf. 315 pp. $6.95.

A man, no longer young, with a history of having wanted to be famous; then, having achieved that in a rush, of hiding out from an adoring and rapacious world. With a history, too, of saying, writing, and singing the opposite of what he means, or not quite what he means, and sometimes not even knowing what he means, yet always, presumably, pledged to a species of truth-telling. On some occasions when Dylan has sung what he means straight out, he has later retracted it and disabused many who thought they understood what he had in mind and were pleased by it.

Dylan has gone through a number of changes. For several years, he worked diligently at making himself "interesting," inventing a fabulous autobiography to go with his assumed name. Later, under the pressure of exposés and his own evolving maturity, he partly renounced this self-made myth, turned his back on the political concerns that had informed the early songs that had made him famous, abandoning (seemingly) one style of music and sensibility for another, and then still another, meanwhile disturbing and fascinating a lot of people, and always getting richer and more famous. The ironies that he employed, these paradoxes, turnabouts, fibs, and changes are supposed to be the genius's prerogative: they force his audience to dig deeper, help the genius himself to survive.

This is no effortless task in America, where genius is confused often with celebrity, and celebrities make young suicides. Dylan has contrived to survive success. At the age of 32, he has been in the glare for a decade and may be considered an old man by the standards of his profession. Now the anthologies devoted to him, the unauthorized and semi-authorized bi-

The VICTORS and the VANQUISHED
by Heda Kovály and Erazim Kohák

This moving book is the result of the experience of dialogue in which foes discover their common humanity.

One of the authors, Heda Kovály, a survivor of Auschwitz, was the wife of Rudolf Margolius, a dedicated young Communist whom the Czechoslovak Communist Party placed in a high government position only to execute him as a conspirator, and finally a decade later to declare him innocent. Even more than the Moscow trials of the 'thirties, the infamous event known to history as the Slánský trial, staged in 1952, marks a turning point in the story of revolution.

"This is an extraordinary memoir, so heartbreaking that I have reread it for months, unable to rise to the business of 'reviewing' less a book than a life repeatedly outraged by the worst totalitarians in Europe. Yet it is written with so much quiet respect for the minutiae of justice and truth that one does not know where and how to specify Heda Kovály's splendidness as a human being. We, the bystanders, are lucky to have such survivors to teach us our only future—if we are to survive . . . Heda Kovály describes, unrelievedly and unrelentingly, the horrors of living under the bestiality of the Nazis and the brutal hypocrisy of the Communists.

The exiled Czech philosopher Erazim Kohák, who teaches in this country, has contributed some valuable chapters on the political misfortunes of Czechoslovakia. Professor Kohák is a superb analyst of Communist pretense; he is a wholly admirable philosopher-exponent of democracy as a living, ethical ideal."

—Alfred Kazin
The New York Times Book Review

"Their hauntingly written account deserves to become a classic statement of modern men's encounter with revolution."

—Steven Kelman
The Washington Post

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ographies, are beginning to come out, indicating that inexorably he is being put in his place—the past. This probably brings him no great joy, though it is impossible to be sure and not essential to know. For what it is worth, however, one of the more innocent remarks attributed to him, which he has not retracted, is to the effect that more than anything else, he wanted to be "bigger than Presley." This desire, expressed when Dylan was a complete unknown from Hibbing, Minnesota, is revealing of the dream life of an American boy, entranced by legendary fame as much as, perhaps more than, by money.

If Dylan today is not as rich as Elvis Presley, he is at least as well known. His songs linger on the radio and the juke-box, his face is on the posters, so famous that identification would be redundant, he has appeared in movies, and a new generation of the really young hum his tunes, recite his lyrics from memory like texts. The fact that he got what he said he wanted without killing himself—that he has become a "living legend," as the cliché goes (in contrast with his dead contemporaries in music, Janis Joplin, Jimmi Hendrix, Jim Morrison)—may give him satisfaction.

It is easier and finally more important to explain Dylan's hold on a couple of generations of the record-buying young than it is to understand Dylan himself. The flurry of biographies that promise inside information and the complete picture of the hero only deliver more or less on the first promise. Better to go to the source, Dylan's own words and music. The former—the lyrics and liner notes from his ten albums and numerous "singles" from the early sixties to the early seventies—have been collected in a handsome book with Dylan's doodles and drawings. The first impression, on flipping through these pages, is of how prolific and various Dylan has been in so relatively short a time, and of the long journey he has made from his first accusatory songs, based on the headlines, to the apolitical, very personal and romantic ballads of his latest period.

On closer reading, this impression must be modified and added to. Without the music, lacking the powerfully distracting sound of Dylan's voice, his harmonica and guitar, the mass of his words on paper conclusively prove that, contrary to reputation and claims, he is no poet. His rhyming is crude, the lines do not scan, signify or move (in either sense), and many of the images are arbitrary, if not impossible: *The ghost of 'lectricity howls in the bones of her face; Crimson flames tied through my ears. In* "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," Dylan does achieve a repetitive, incantatory poetic drive, coupled with strangely allusive, appropriate images (*I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin'*)—but this is rare, and nearly lost among the lyrics looking forlorn and disappointing in naked print, and the word-jags that read like logorrhea.

WHAT IS MISSING in this book is Dylan's essence, which can only be apprehended by listening to him sing. For example, the *Crimson flames* image, among his most egregious, serves for the first line of "My Back Pages," one of his most interesting and winning songs, and also, in the context of the quick and crowded, hopeful and pathetic history of the youthful so-called counter culture of which Dylan has been a reluctant hero, one of the most important. Switch on the stereo, and it is, in more than one sense, like turning on a current that transforms the words drastically into something that, even nine years after Dylan recorded it, is musically hard to resist and intellectually sufficiently complex. Dylan's voice, nagging and jerky, stressing unexpected syllables, in the refrains more pure and free-flowing, announces that he has left behind, gone beyond the self-righteous, cruel, and arrogant view of the world that had given his best-selling songs their cutting edge only a year before, because . . . *I was so much older then,/I'm younger than that now.* A year previous he had threatened in a song, *Come mothers and fathers/Throughout the land/And don't criticize/What you don't understand/Your sons and your daughters/Are beyond your command/Your old road is/Rapidly agin'./Please get out of the new one/If you can't lend your hand/For the times they are a-changin'.* Now he reconsiders: *In a soldier's stance, I aimed my hand/At the mongrel dogs who teach/Fearing not that I'd become my enemy/In the instant that I preach/My pathway led by confusion boats/Mutiny from stern to bow./Ah, but I was so much older then,/I'm younger than that now.*

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"The Times They Are A-Changin' " is typical of what Dylan has called his "finger-pointin' " songs. These put the finger on and squelched parents, teachers, generals, bureaucrats, politicians, the police. With hindsight it seems not surprising that Dylan rapidly won a larger audience for himself with these songs, no longer limited to the folk purists in the coffee houses, but among that war-baby generation of students who were starting to fill the campuses to bursting, tended to talk about politics and civil rights more than their immediate predecessors had, and some of whom were getting ready, whether they knew it or not, to foment trouble, even if the mass media did say so. Thus Dylan was on time with what was taken for his message, if not a little ahead, as in the political, cynical songs of his next period. *There are no/politics,* he wrote in one of his self-explanatory liner notes, . . .*no right wing/or left wing . . ./there is only up wing/an' down wing.* And whatever the truth of this notion is, whatever parts of wisdom or naiveté, it gave pain to the leftists, of both the "Old" and "New" varieties, who had thought Dylan was their boy, in much the same way that the folk purists squirmed when Dylan switched from the acoustical to electrified guitar.

Nevertheless, Dylan, lucky or shrewd, does not seem to have alienated his audience permanently for either ideological or aesthetic sins; on the contrary, he has increased it cumulatively while apparently abandoning old ground and staking out new. This reflects something of the shallowness of ideology and aesthetics in America during this time, perhaps, or it demonstrates the pluralistic easy-going ability to get a charge out of quite different, even logically antagonistic materials simultaneously, as for an obvious and no doubt actual example someone living in a cabin in the California hills, and seriously worried about the pollution of the environment, might swallow chemicals wholly synthesized in a laboratory to hallucinate, without thinking twice. Likewise the last few youngsters who finished off the New Left in a grim fit of self-destruction chose blithely to misconstrue Dylan, picking the name of their sect out of a metaphor (*You don't need a weather man/To know which way the wind blows*) in an anarchistic song ("Subterranean Homesick Blues") that is only curious on the printed page but comes across like a burst of joyous energy when Dylan sings it.

In fact, if Dylan's collected words prove he isn't a poet, the entire body of his songs so far, listened to patiently in a long sitting, suggests that, from the beginning, he had a calling foremost as a musician, and even when he sang with bitter, cruel, or cynical words, in a wilfully "ugly" voice, he expressed a swinging joy distantly removed from the dry, perhaps equally necessary, duties of the political life. "Boots of Spanish Leather" (1963) is in much the same mode as the deceptively simple, more conventionally "beautiful" love songs of Dylan's latest albums, recorded, significantly, in Nashville, not New York. Dylan, once only the darling of bright collegians and hip street people, whose rumored appearance could fill the Berkeley football stadium or Carnegie Hall (or, more recently, Madison Square Garden for the Bangladesh Concert) as if he were a domestic Yevtushenko or Voznesensky, has arrived by a march that does not seem unnatural or forced to a record studio in the country-and-western capital, sweetly crooning for the rednecks, having "sold out," some might say. The accusation implies that Dylan is venal; there is no way for someone who does not know him well to be sure, and again, it does not seem important to know. The other implication is that Dylan, although he sang, *Don't follow leaders,* welched on a responsibility to the people who took him for their spokesman, hero, mouthpiece . . . Messiah.

THE FAILURE of conscience or nerve implied here can be rejected. Dylan's prime responsibility as an artist (a word he has spat out, yet the thing that he is) must have been to himself, first to keep alive, second to write and sing songs. Messianic leaders in these last years in America have fared poorly: the luckiest have escaped assassination. Dylan might be long dead by now, and it would have meant the loss of a master of song, if he had not, with a realistic sense of humor and of self-preservation, put himself in his place: *In times behind, I too/wished I'd lived/in the hungry thirties/an' blew in like Woody/ . . . makin' the rounds/t' the union halls/but . . ./they've been remodeled/and' those union halls/like the cio/an' the nmu/come now! can you see em/needin' me/for a song/or two?* □

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In the Magazines

"Black Progress and Liberal Rhetoric," by Ben J. Wattenberg and Richard M. Scammon. COMMENTARY, April 1973.

"Black Progress or Illiberal Rhetoric?," by John A. Morsell. CRISIS, June–July 1973.

American blacks have made such remarkable progress since the inception of the New Frontier that their current condition is far better than most people realize, according to Scammon and Wattenberg, spokesmen for the "center" of the Democratic party. Replying in *Crisis,* Assistant Executive Director of the NAACP Dr. John Morsell denies that black progress has been rapid or that conditions in the black community are good. Throughout the debate, both sides are exceedingly conscious of the political implications of their analyses.

Scammon and Wattenberg claim their findings of black progress under Kennedy-Johnson are helpful for those trying to defend liberal programs against the attacks of Nixon and Moynihan. They argue, sensibly, that one cannot admit that liberal legislation has failed to bring black progress, and at the same time call for the continuation of such programs.

Yet there is more at stake, as Morsell's angry reply indicates. For Scammon and Wattenberg use their findings to lend support to a political strategy they developed years ago. They want liberals to adopt a rhetoric of concern for the needs and aspirations of middle-income Americans, as well as of blacks and the poor. By arguing that blacks are no longer doing terribly badly, they hope to make it appear more reasonable to deemphasize race as a political issue. (Of course, it is possible to agree with their political strategy without agreeing with their assessment of black progress.)

Morsell fears, on the other hand, that if it were admitted that blacks have made substantial progress, blacks might no longer command sufficient moral pressure to ensure continued progress. Hence Morsell accuses Scammon and Wattenberg of playing Nixon's game by providing justification for the policy of "benign neglect."

Obviously, one's commitment to various strategies for future black progress will predispose one to accentuate, or minimize, the extent of black progress since 1961. What sort of evidence do we have?

Scammon and Wattenberg's argument about rapid black progress makes three points. First, black income has increased from 53 percent of white income in 1961 to 63 percent in 1971. Second, a majority of blacks are now "middle-class." (They live in families with incomes of at least $8,000 per year.) Third, black progress is likely to continue because of the South's economic development and the youthfulness of the black population.

In response, Morsell argues that black progress has been slow, especially if the proportion of black income to white income in 1945 (57 percent) is compared with that of 1970 (61 percent). Morsell argues, too, that there is still much poverty in the black community. (Scammon and Wattenberg agree.) Finally, Morsell points out, blacks cannot be secure about racial progress; it can slow down as it did after World War II, or can even be reversed.

To support their arguments, both sides present numerous statistics, with which one must be very careful. For instance, the Census Bureau reported in 1970 that Northern black couples under the age of 35 had essentially equaled the average income of their white counterparts. Moynihan cited this finding in his 1970 "benign neglect" memorandum, and here Scammon and Wattenberg cite it in their article. However, the Census Bureau later re-

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ported that the finding was incomplete; the figure for young black couples was so high because more young black women worked than did white women. Young northern black families in which only the husband worked did not gain at all on similar white families during the sixties. No one lies, no one presents invalid statistics; one simply selects those statistics that buttress one's argument.

I WOULD OFFER this evaluation of the arguments of Scammon and Wattenberg, and of Morsell:

1. Black income did increase significantly as a proportion of white income in the years 1961–71; in fact, young black families gained even more.

2. Most blacks are not middle-class; those earning more than $8,000 include blacks near poverty, working-class blacks, middle-class blacks, and even upper-class blacks.

3. There is still a large group of poor blacks, despite the fact that more government aid is available now than in 1961.

4. The gap between black and white income is still large, and it will remain so for quite some time.

Beyond these unsurprising conclusions, the figures suggest something quite important. Is the black community becoming bifurcated? While some blacks have taken advantage of liberal programs to flee poverty, have others been *unable* to take advantage of them? What's going to happen to those 50 percent of "Negro males in the 18–25-year-old category" in large urban ghettos "who have never worked and may well never in life enter the labor force"? Can we expect their income to approach that of whites? Will the young blacks suffering the diseases bred by poverty catch up? How about those living in "multi-problem" families?

If such a bifurcation is taking place, it would mean that liberal programs may be inadequate to reach a segment of the black community. Are there better programs, or should we simply attempt to continue the old ones on a larger scale? Bifurcation in the black community could also lead to a political split in the black community with middle-class blacks ceasing to identify their interests with those of the poor (the Atlanta syndrome).

Clearly, the situation is neither rosy nor simple, and Scammon and Wattenberg's optimism is, at least, premature.

Recent Census Bureau evidence indicates that it is not inevitable that black income will continue to increase relative to white income; in fact, the Census Bureau reported that black income had decreased from 61 percent of white income in 1970 to 59 percent in 1972.

It seems fair to assume that the economic downturn of President Nixon's first term was partly responsible. Inasmuch as blacks are "last hired, first fired," the economic downturn raised the rate of black unemployment faster than that of white unemployment. This would probably be important in bringing a halt to the relative improvement of black income.

These latest Census Bureau figures, short-term though they are, seriously challenge the wisdom both of Moynihan's advocacy of "benign neglect" and of Scammon and Wattenberg's analysis of black progress. It would appear that continued black progress is not to be taken for granted and that economic prosperity and federal action are essential if that progress is to continue.

"The Strange Case of the Comintern," by Theodore Draper. SURVEY, Summer 1972.

Newly discovered manuscripts reveal that currently accepted notions about the Communist International's first decade are substantially incorrect, Theodore Draper reports. According to manuscripts left by Jules Humbert-Droz and Angelo Tasca, Comintern representatives during the '20s, it was Bukharin in 1927–28, rather than Stalin, who initiated the "Third Period" in Comintern world policies, which involved a switch from Communist electoral cooperation with Socialists to an attack on "Social Fascism" and a dual union policy in Europe and the United States. (Humbert-Droz reported, for example, that Stalin supported a 1928 electoral strategy of Communist-Socialist cooperation; when Bukharin and Humbert-

(continued on page 528)

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Hanna Fenichel Pitkin

The Roots of Conservatism

Michael Oakeshott and the Denial of Politics

The seemingly uncontrollable movement of American policy toward domestic repression and imperial warfare makes it of the utmost urgency that we understand what is involved in our "new conservatism." The most perceptive understanding may come not from a hurried look at the phenomenon itself, but through distance, theory, and an examination of roots. For conservatism is not just one phenomenon but many; and much can be learned about our current domestic variant by examining the tradition in political theory on which it sometimes draws. This essay, then, is concerned with the thought of Michael Oakeshott, with occasional glances backward toward Edmund Burke and sideways toward Hannah Arendt. Though he is not well known in America, Oakeshott, a professor emeritus of political science at the London School of Economics, is one of the few great living spokesmen of the conservative tradition; he has been called "the most profound and original political thinker that England has produced in the twentieth century." [1] We shall find that Oakeshott understands much that is missed or denied by the new conservatism in America, indeed, that he might even want to disown it. But in the end the two conservatisms share some fundamental weaknesses.

This essay is part of a larger work written during free time made available to me by a grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, for which I am most grateful. Many of the best ideas in it came to me from Sara Shumer or Tracy Strong; what I owe to them exceeds anything I could acknowledge here.

[1] J. W. Grove, "Preface," to W. H. Greenleaf, *Oakeshott's Philosophical Politics* (London: Longmans, Green, 1966).

Michael Oakeshott was born on December 11, 1901. He attended St. George's School, Harpenden, and then Gonville and Caius College at Cambridge where he read history, graduating in 1923. He became a fellow of the College two years later and was for many years a university lecturer in history. After serving in the army 1940–45, he returned to Cambridge. He was at Nuffield College, Oxford, in 1949–50, and went to the London School of Economics as University Professor of Political Science in 1951.

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I

In his later writings, the best of which are collected in *Rationalism in Politics,* Oakeshott articulates a conception of human society that might best be labeled "ecological." [2] He is profoundly aware of the complexity of institutions, customs, ways of life, the extent to which a society is a living whole. Each of us normally perceives only a small and personal part of that whole, but in fact the conditions of our lives, and even our very selves, are the products of culture and history; and what we do has social reverberations that will set the conditions of life for future generations. This elaborate structure is constantly in the process of change, largely as the result of individuals' private choices and activities; it never stays fixed. In general these piecemeal, relatively natural changes are easily absorbed by the system and do no serious harm. But though Oakeshott rejects an "organic" view of society, he shares the organicist's anxiety about planned, large-scale social change.[3] Whenever we deliberately introduce some new policy or institution, we, as it were, upset the ecological balance of the system in ways we cannot control or foresee. "The total change is always more extensive than the change desired," and there is always danger that the harmful by-products may outweigh the intended benefit.[4]

Whether or not one shares the resulting conservative implications for politics, one can find much of value in Oakeshott's vision of what a society is, what a civilization is. For Oakeshott understands that each of us is a product of his society, of history; we become the particular persons we do become by internalizing the language, cultural norms, habits of behavior in the midst of which we are born. Society and individual are not really opposites, but two ways of looking at the same set of phenomena. This means, further, that neither our society nor our civilization is a contractual arrangement, which we can renegotiate whenever we find it profitable to do so. We can, of course, make changes, but those changes will be part of the continuity; and we ourselves, carriers of the society, will continue through those changes. Oakeshott sees also the extent to which the patterns and regularities in a culture remain piecemeal and unarticulated, how they are learned from concrete, paradigmatic instances, perpetuated in some instances, changed in other instances.

Yet not all societies are equally continuous and coherent, not all ecosystems in natural balance. Oakeshott can teach us much about what Simone Weil called the "need for roots," about what we have lost in losing traditional society: stability, security, meaning, a sense of self and purpose. He sees the damage done to people—living and suffering human beings—when their lives become fragmented and chaotic, when there is no history and no fixed home, when all possessions are plastic and "disposable," when all agencies are impersonal and faceless, when all sense of continuity is lost so that people become, in Burke's memorable phrase, "little better than the flies of a summer." [5] Though Oakeshott may not have the cure for our modern condition, he di-

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[2] Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1962). An earlier work on epistemology, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), cannot be discussed within the confines of this essay.
[3] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 183.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 172.

[5] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* Thomas H. D. Mahoney, ed. (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), p. 108. Here and elsewhere I find strong parallels between Oakeshott and Burke. To be sure, Oakeshott sometimes disparages Burke; and as critics have pointed out, there are some crucial differences between them, particularly Oakeshott's determination to make his case without metaphysical concepts such as divine purpose or natural law. But he also cites Burke approvingly, and the parallels as well as the differences between the two conservatisms are instructive. See Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* pp. 183, 23; Michael Oakeshott, "Contemporary British Politics," *Cambridge Journal,* 1 (May 1948): 474–490, at 475; Neal Wood, "A Guide to the Classics: the Skepticism of Professor Oakeshott," *Journal of Politics,* 21 (November 1959): 647–662, at 647; Greenleaf, *op. cit.,* pp. 3, 83.

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agnoses it well; and at least he does not add insult to our injury by claiming that society has always looked and must always look like this. He has a living vision of what community means, of what community was—not a uniform totality in which the individual disappears, but a home within which he can develop, whose norms are less his restraints than the means of his freedom.

Out of this profound vision of the nature of what Marx called human "species life," there evolves the central theme running through almost all of Oakeshott's later writings, a theme that he uses like a great searchlight, turning it to illuminate first one and then another realm of human activity. The details of the argument—and, in particular, its resolution—vary from case to case; but its basic structure is always the juxtaposition of two contrasting approaches to the activity in question.[6] One of these two approaches is always some version of what in politics Oakeshott calls "Rationalism"; I shall use that term for it throughout, though he sometimes gives it different names in other fields. It is always opposed to another, contrasting approach, more difficult to designate, centering on the traditional, the incremental, the inarticulate. In politics, Oakeshott calls it "conservatism," or "the pursuit of intimations." In the end he is always critical of the former alternative, sometimes rejecting it, sometimes modifying, as the subject matter at issue varies; but the entire sequence of his shorter writings seems to be a series of forays against the persistent problem of Rationalism.

In general, Oakeshott means by Rationalism the attempt to reject the authority of all tradition, custom, prejudice, habit, or inherited convention; the desire to call everything into question, rethink it for oneself *de novo,* rebuild on a new and more secure foundation constructed exclusively from one's own direct experience and "reason." Oakeshott traces the origins of this impulse in the modern world to Descartes and Bacon, stressing their simultaneous hostility to the authority of the past, and craving for a new certainty that resulted in the centrality of method in their thought. The Rationalist seeks the certain and orderly, the logically neat and simple, the abstract, the quantitative, the technical, the efficient, the unambiguous, what can be made explicit and laid out systematically. Rationalism is contrasted with an orientation that appreciates the value of things as they are, inherited from the past, and that respectfully recognizes their complexity and interdependence, the richness of concrete reality. This orientation values tradition, prescription, continuity; it stresses the intricacies of human practice that defy formulation in explicit rules: know-how, habit, the slow evolution of a civilization, community rather than organization, character rather than technique.

Although Oakeshott is always in one or another way critical of Rationalism, this does not mean that he is hostile to reason or to rationality.[7] Rationalism is no more equivalent to rationality than scientism to science or moralism to morality.[8] Indeed, one of the realms with respect to which Oakeshott traces out the dichotomy between Rationalism and its opposite is reason itself: there is a Rationalistic understanding of reason, and another based on coherence in a tradition. According to the Rationalistic view, being rational means pursuing, in an efficient and logical way, a goal which has been self-consciously and "independently premeditated," which has not been accepted passively from any traditional source.[9] In this

[6] Because of the differences in resolution of the problem in different realms, which will be discussed further below, Bernard Crick is wrong to suppose that "it matters little which we examine in detail." Bernard Crick, "The World of Michael Oakeshott," *Encounter,* 20 (June 1963): 65–74, at 68.

[7] Oakeshott is sometimes misunderstood in this regard, as he anticipated he might be: "Concept of a Philosophical Jurisprudence," *Politica,* 3 (September 1938): 203–222, and (December 1938): 345–360, at 349.

[8] Michael Oakeshott, "Scientific Politics," *Cambridge Journal,* 1 (March 1948): 347–358, at 348, 349, 354.

[9] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 83.

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sense, rational conduct "is behaviour *deliberately* directed to the achievement of a *formulated* purpose and is governed solely by that purpose." The alternative approach sees rationality as differently defined in each realm of human activity and thus as a matter of internal coherence within each realm. Being rational in science, for instance, will be quite different from being rational in moral conduct. In each case, rationality depends on fidelity to the traditions of the particular kind of human enterprise involved. It means "acting in such a way that the coherence of the idiom of activity to which the conduct belongs is preserved and possibly enhanced." [10]

Oakeshott finds the same sort of duality in many other fields. Thus science may be regarded either Rationalistically, as a body of achieved knowledge made explicit in systematic theories and hypotheses; or else, as the ongoing, largely unarticulated activity of scientists, rooted in what Polanyi calls "personal knowledge." [11] More generally, all of knowledge may be dichotomized into a Rationalistic sort that Oakeshott calls "technical," formulable in precise rules and seeming to promise certainty; and a different sort that he calls "practical," and "know-how," the knowledge of experience rather than reflection, that exists "only in use." [12] There are also two contrasting "forms," as Oakeshott calls them, "of the moral life": one explicit and didactic, requiring deliberation of systematic ideals, and another based on character and habit, arising directly out of a tradition of behavior.[13] These conflicting approaches to rationality, knowledge, science, and morality correspond also to two conceptions of education. Rationalistic knowledge, whether of science, moral principles, law, or cooking, can be imparted directly and explicitly by *telling* it to the student; but the various kinds of know-how and habitual practice cannot really be taught or learned, "but only imparted and acquired." Such knowledge "exists only in practice, and the only way to acquire it is by apprenticeship to a master . . . by continuous contact with one who is perpetually practicing it." [14]

In politics the Rationalist's distrust of all inherited traditional arrangements seeks expression in action. The political Rationalist wants to restructure society in fundamental ways to make it more uniform, efficient, logical. He sees only chaos in the tradition, and feels that "this is no way for rational human beings to be spending their lives." [15] So he construes political life as the opportunity for "imposing upon" the citizenry his vision of order, "a vision of human activity co-ordinated and set going in a single direction . . . a public and compulsory manner of living." [16] His guide is not history or any tradition of past thought or practice, but what Oakeshott calls "ideology," an abstract principle or set of principles purporting to be independently premeditated.

A political conservative, by contrast, is disposed to preserve inherited institutions. He is willing to reform or adjust them where that is necessary in order to keep them stable, but his manner of reform is always piecemeal and gradual, in ways consistent with the tradition. He prefers existing practice to the abstract imported idea. His politics will be conducted cautiously and minimally, refusing to have anything to do "with innovations designed to meet merely hypothetical situations"; it will proceed by

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[10] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 215. Oakeshott acknowledges his debt to Michael Polanyi more than once; *ibid.*, p. 8n; and Michael Oakeshott, "Science and Society," *Cambridge Journal*, 1 (August 1948): 689–697, at 692n.
[12] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, pp. 8–10; for the conception of "know-how," compare Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949), chap. 2.
[13] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, pp. 61 ff.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 11. This treatment of education is also paralleled by Oakeshott's more specific views on the nature of a university, but there is no room to discuss them here.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 186.
[16] *Ibid.*

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"slow, small changes" only.[17] He sees the task of politics as being to enhance the coherence in a nation's inherited culture and institutions by developing what is implicit in them but "does not fully appear" as yet.[18] Oakeshott's example is, interestingly enough, the extension of the vote to women. The Rationalist might advocate women's suffrage in terms of natural rights or some other abstract principle, but for the conservative "the only cogent reason" was "that in all or most other important respects" women had already been enfranchised. There was thus "an incoherence in the arrangements of the society which pressed convincingly for remedy." [19] In short, the conservative does not oppose all change; he presses for slow change in accord with prevailing patterns and trends.

II

As a number of commentators have noted, an ambiguity runs through Oakeshott's treatment of this central theme of dichotomization: it seems that he cannot decide whether the Rationalism he opposes is impossible, so that we in fact cannot act Rationalistically in politics, morals, education; or merely undesirable, so that there is a real danger that we might do so.[20]

From the time when Oakeshott begins to be concerned with Rationalism (or its equivalent by other names), he is also convinced that there is something fundamentally wrong with it. He engages it in battle in ways reminiscent both of Hegel's attack on merely abstract formalism that "has lost hold of the living nature of concrete fact," and of Burke's struggle with the "pure metaphysical abstractions" of the French *philosophes*.[21] Basically Oakeshott argues that the ideals the Rationalist claims as "independently premeditated" are in fact derived from and dependent on prior inarticulate activity. Thus, practical scientific theories and concepts derive their meaning only from the activity of scientists; our moral ideals are derived from prior moral practice; and our political principles and institutions are the precipitates of earlier traditional activity, evolved without conscious general plan. An abstraction by itself, without the complex concrete practice that underlies it, is meaningless and useless; only the practice tells us how to apply it. In Oakeshott's famous analogy, "a cook is not a man who first has a vision of a pie and then tries to make it; he is a man skilled in cookery, and both his projects and his achievement spring from that skill." [22] We live first and think afterward, and our thought is derivative from what we do.

Thus, the Rationalist's belief in an abstract "technical knowledge" and in goals set without reliance on any inherited tradition is an "illusion"; it is impossible for any "actual engagement" in activity ever to "spring from or be governed by an independently premeditated end." [23] As soon as we try to put the goal or ideal into practice, we are forced to interpret and apply it by means of the traditional skills of the activity. And even the allegedly independent goal itself turns out to derive from the enterprise. "It

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[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 190, 49.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 125. As we shall see in the next section, this is also Oakeshott's definition of politics.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[20] For example, J. G. Blumler, "Politics, Poetry, and Practice," *Political Studies*, 12 (October 1964): 353–361, at 357; Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 68; Colin Falck, "Romanticism in Politics," *New Left Review*, 18 (January-February 1963): 60–71, at 64; John C. Rees, "Professor Oakeshott on Political Education," *Mind*, 62 (January 1953): 68–74, at 70; J. W. N. Watkins, "Political Tradition and Political Theory," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 2 (October 1952): 323–337, at 334 ff. A full discussion of the nature and significance of this ambiguity in philosophical terms unfortunately is not possible within the confines of this essay.

[21] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, J. B. Baillie, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 110; Edmund Burke, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," in Peter J. Stanlis, ed., *Edmund Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), p. 522.

[22] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 91.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 99.

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is impossible even to project a purpose for activity in advance of the activity itself," for the practice is the only available source of problems and questions.[24] Accordingly, Rationalistic morality is "not, by itself, a possible form of morality at all." [25] And abstract political ideology, far from being

> the quasi-divine parent of political activity, . . . turns out to be its earthly stepchild. . . . It is a system of ideas abstracted from the manner in which people have been accustomed to go about the business of attending to the arrangements of their societies. . . . In short, political activity comes first and a political ideology follows after.[26]

Even the ideology of the French Revolution, the ultimate in Rationalistic abstraction, although certainly the product of reflection, was not the product of reflection in advance of activity, but an extrapolation from traditional English political practice.[27]

Accordingly, politics itself is defined by Oakeshott as "the activity of attending to the general arrangements of a set of people whom chance or choice have brought together," and "who, in respect of their common recognition of a manner of attending to its arrangements, compose a single [illegible]munity." [28] Oakeshott himself explains that he says "attending to" rather than "making" arrangements to emphasize the necessary continuity involved, the fact that at least in the "hereditary cooperative groups" called "states," political activity

> is never offered the blank sheet of infinite possibility. In any generation, even the most revolutionary, the arrangements which are enjoyed always far exceed those which are recognized to stand in need of attention, and those which are being prepared for enjoyment are few in comparison with those which receive amendment: the new is an insignificant proportion of the whole.[29]

In accord with Oakeshott's definition, then, politics is necessarily "the pursuit, not of a dream, or of a general principle, but of the intimations implicit in a given tradition"; and much of what was introduced in the previous section as characterizing political conservatism is also, or excusively, treated by him as definitive of all politics.[30] Moreover, he emphasizes that the definition is not intended as hortatory, but "as a description of what political activity actually is." [31] Oakeshott himself raises the question whether his manner of defining politics may not confuse "what is, perhaps, normal" in that realm with "what is necessary," whether it might not ignore "important exceptions" like the Norman Conquest of England or the Russian Revolution.[32] But his answer to the question is negative. Even on such "exceptional" occasions, real Rationalistic politics, real innovation is a logical impossibility; even after a revolution the great bulk of social patterns remains the same. Thus it is an "illusion" to suppose "that politics is ever anything more than the pursuit of intimations," or that there can ever be, in politics, "a destination to be reached or even a detectable strand of progress. 'The world is the best of all possible worlds, and *everything* in it is a necessary evil.' " [33]

Now one certainly can regard human affairs from such a perspective that genuine change seems impossible; one can stress the

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 99; cf. pp. 100, 108; Oakeshott, "Concept of a Philosophical Jurisprudence," p. 691; Michael Oakeshott, "The Idea of a University," *Listener*, 47 (March 9, 1950): 424–426, at 424.

[25] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 75.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 118–119; cf. Michael Oakeshott, "The Customer is Never Wrong," *Listener*, 54 (August 25, 1955): 301–302.

[27] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 120.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 123. Oakeshott also proposes another definition in an unpublished paper: politics is "activity and utterance connected with government and the instruments of government"; Greenleaf, *op. cit.* [see footnote 1], p. 43n.

[29] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 112.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 133.

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continuities in culture and society to the point where "there's nothing new under the sun"; continuities persist through even the most abrupt and traumatic historical crises. Short of divine intervention, everything created or invented by human beings must spring from their minds, and thereby from their past experience. But surely one logical consequence of taking this position about thought and change is that radicalism no longer constitutes any sort of danger. One need not warn against what is impossible. If all ideologies are abbreviations of traditional activity, then it is not clear how any ideology might threaten tradition. If all politics is the pursuit of intimations, then this will be as true of ideological, radical politics as of Burkean conservatism.

Yet this is not, in fact, a position that Oakeshott is content to adopt. He rejects the charge that his view of politics entails any "crude determinism." Human choices are very real; there are better and worse political outcomes, wise and unwise policies. He is profoundly concerned to warn against the dangers of Rationalism, radicalism, and ideology. The main thrust of his writings makes that perfectly clear.

Part of Oakeshott's ambiguity about what's wrong with Rationalism clearly has to do with a corresponding uncertainty about what Rationalism is, and with what sorts of weapons it may best be defeated. We have already noted that his resolution of the basic dichotomy between Rationalism and its opposing view is different in different realms. Sometimes Rationalism is simply rejected outright, and the opposing view is adopted as Oakeshott's own; for example, in higher education vocational training is flatly dismissed as inappropriate to a university. At other times, Rationalism and its opponent are seen as two abstractions from a single concrete reality that must necessarily always contain both aspects. Then Oakeshott can either treat them as opposite ends of a continuum, advocating moderation and balance between them, as in his discussion of morality. Or else, he can adopt a Hegelian manner of argument, proposing his own teaching as a higher synthesis that rejects but also incorporates both Rationalism and its opponent; this he does, for example, in the essay on "Political Education." But it is in the realm of politics that Oakeshott clearly has the greatest difficulty in finding an appropriate manner of resolution.

It is important to note that there is variation not merely in realms of activity, but also in the way Rationalism is conceived. Sometimes it is treated as theory, an *interpretation* that purports to describe what we actually do; at other times, as a *style* or manner of conduct. As an interpretation of what we do, Rationalism can be decisively defeated if Oakeshott succeeds in showing that it is logically impossible to do what the Rationalist says we do. But as a mere interpretation that cannot become practice, Rationalism constitutes no danger. Who but a theorist cares about an incorrect interpretation?

But as an actual style of conduct in politics, morality, education, Rationalism can be a real danger, its evil consequences evident in the world around us. As a style of conduct, however, it cannot be logically defeated; if criticized, the criticism must be not logical or ontological but practical. The decisive philosophical victory is then no longer available; and Oakeshott must prove the superiority of conservatism in practical (historical and contingent) terms. In part, it seems to me, Oakeshott's ambiguity about what's wrong with Rationalism derives from his unwillingness to abandon the power of the philosophical mode of argument, even —or rather, especially—when he wants to warn us against the practical evils of Rationalism.

The matter is not that simple. For Oakeshott's major concern in his later writings is politics, a realm in which the problems of necessity and choice, interpretation and style, become inextricably intertwined. If philosophy is concerned with questioning the deep necessities of our lives, it must necessarily

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end in their acceptance, and be retrospective. But the problems of politics are problems of choice and change; the concerns of politics are matters potentially subject to our collective will. Then philosophy must seem irrelevant to politics. Yet it is surely obvious that action will be more likely to succeed where we know accurately what is necessary and what subject to our choice. Specifying this sort of demarcation between "what is to be done," and what is a "providential fact" that sets limits on our possibilities, has always been one of the great tasks undertaken by political theory. Oakeshott, it seems to me, attempts to avoid full acknowledgment of that task by insisting that "philosophy" is different from "doctrine," the task of the former being to "explain" while that of the latter is to "recommend conduct." [34] Yet he well knows that even the most abstract theory can have consequences for action if people believe in it, particularly in politics. Indeed, that is precisely the danger of Rationalism.

It seems to me that what Oakeshott ultimately wants to argue, though he is far from clear about it, is this: Rationalism as an interpretation of what we do is always wrong, because it is logically impossible to do what the Rationalist says we do. Yet people may —and many do—believe in the truth of this false, impossible doctrine, and act on it. The result is not that they act Rationalistically, for that is impossible, but that they act differently from people who believe otherwise, for instance, from those who believe in conservatism. There is thus an identifiable and pernicious style in politics that results from believing in the false doctrine of Rationalism. That is why Oakeshott says that the Rationalist misunderstands what he is doing, "fails to recognize" the "true spring" of his activity.[35] Acting *in accord with* the Rationalistic model is impossible, acting *on* it, unfortunately, is not. The problem for understanding Oakeshott's political theory then becomes: what is this style of conduct like and what actual harm does it do?

Oakeshott's answers to this question are multiple and sometimes difficult to interpret. Although continuity and tradition in sociocultural life are inevitable, something extremely valuable can be destroyed by pernicious political action, namely, coherence within the traditions that compose a civilization or society. At any given historical point,

> the arrangements which constitute a society capable of political activity, whether they are customs or institutions or laws or diplomatic decisions, are at once coherent and incoherent; they compose a pattern and at the same time they intimate a sympathy for what does not fully appear

—as yet; they compose a pattern and at the same time they contain conflicts and inconsistencies.[36] The task of politics is to enhance the consistency, pursue what is implicit but not yet developed in the existing patterns, reduce conflict.[37] The failure of politics takes the form of increased conflict and fragmentation. A society may pursue many specific goals, but for Oakeshott it is always "more important for a society to move together than for it to move either fast or far." [38] Sometimes, indeed, he suggests that all political goals other than stability are meaningless: in politics,

> men sail a boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither starting-place nor appointed destination. The enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel.[39]

But on a boundless sea there is not merely no "appointed" destination; there can be no meaningful destination at all. The only possible value is a stable voyage: don't rock the boat.

But though Oakeshott clearly values sta-

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 29; cf. pp. 132–133.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 94; cf. p. 133.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 133.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

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bility and coherence for their own sakes, he also regards them as instrumental toward achieving some other, perhaps more widely shared political goals. For only tradition and the slow, gradual accretion of habit can generate or protect freedom. Real freedom never inheres in the formality of constitutional provisions or officially proclaimed ideology or institutional structures. Oakeshott agrees with Burke that the "abstract perfection" of such formal freedom is its "practical defect." [40]

> Freedom, like a recipe for game pie, is not a bright idea; it is not a "human right" to be deduced from some speculative concept of human nature. . . . The freedom of an Englishman is not something exemplified in the procedure of *habeas corpus,* it *is,* at that point, the availability of that procedure.[41]

That is why the attempt to export English freedoms to countries that have no related tradition of practice, by introducing the formal structure of some English law or institution, is bound to fail.[42] One of the weaknesses of Rationalism is its foolish "disposition to believe that political machinery can take the place of moral and political education," that one can construct artificial institutions to turn private vices into public virtues and thereby avoid the need to change character.[43] For it is character that determines how institutions will operate, no matter how they are formally constructed.

The reason that only tradition is capable of establishing and protecting freedom is that, secondly, only tradition is an effective restraint on power, and the restraint of power is what freedom is all about. The Englishman's freedom is

> a coherence of mutually supporting liberties, each of which amplifies the whole and none of which stands alone. It springs neither from the separation of church and state, nor from the rule of law, nor from private property, nor from parliamentary government, nor from the writ of *habeas corpus,* nor from the independence of the judiciary, nor from any one of the thousand other devices and arrangements characteristic of our society, but from what each signifies and represents, namely, the absence from our society of overwhelming concentrations of power. This is the most general condition of our freedom.[44]

Clearly, Oakeshott here sees freedom as Hobbes did, as the absence of "external restraints," a *not* being constrained by coercive power. It is achieved by keeping all forms of social power dispersed, the power of government itself at a minimum, just a little bit more than any other "center of power" in the society has.[45] Where "power is dispersed . . . on this account we are free." [46] Again, this cannot be achieved by mere legislation or the imposition of new forms; the only reliable restraint on power is habits of conduct. This is so both because a government that acts arbitrarily will meet far more resistance and therefore needs far more power than one that acts in established patterns; and because only habit can reliably restrain the passions of the rulers themselves, can keep them in their proper role of "neutral umpire" rather than that of one of the players.[47] Oakeshott believes, as Burke did, that tradition is essential to freedom because it is the source of "all the pleasing illusions which make power gentle and obedience liberal." In its absence, in the "groves" of the Rationalist's "academy, at the end of every vista, you see nothing but the gallows." [48]

This is related, in turn, to a further grim consequence of trying to act Rationalistically in politics, seen by both Oakeshott and

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[40] Burke, *Reflections,* p. 68.
[41] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 121.
[42] *Ibid.,* p. 122; "Customer is Never Wrong," p. 301.
[43] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 6.
[44] *Ibid.,* p. 40
[45] *Ibid.,* p. 42.
[46] *Ibid.,* p. 41.
[47] *Ibid.,* pp. 42–43, 187, 193–194.
[48] *Burke, Reflections,* pp. 87, 88.

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Burke: the loss of continuity over time, and the resulting reduction of all goals to impulsive appetite. When we try to substitute Rationalistic ideology for habit in politics, Oakeshott says, "the life of a society loses its rhythm and continuity and is resolved into a succession of problems and crises." [49] Each separate successive difficulty is then supposed to be met ad hoc, "by the application of 'reason' uncontaminated by custom, habit, or prejudice." [50] Clearly what he means is that only tradition makes it possible to coordinate people's short-range, conflicting goals into a long-range public good. Reason does have a useful role in relation to a healthy tradition: the role of occasional critic and resolver of inconsistencies. But in Rationalism, "the intellect . . . ceases to be the critic of political habit and becomes a substitute for habit." [51] Or rather, it tries to do so, but it is unable to create. Reason, which has the "power to rescue from superstition, is given the task of generating human behaviour—a task which, in fact, it cannot perform." [52] The requirements of civility and order are so complex that tradition cannot be deliberately created. It can only evolve gradually and inarticulately over generations. As in technical knowledge and vocational training, so in politics: the Rationalist perspective is one of efficient means toward goals which themselves are not examined—the perspective of applied engineering.

The attempt to act Rationalistically, then, succeeds only in destroying coherence—social coherence among individuals, and chronological coherence, the sensed "partnership between present and past." [53] Both psychologically and structurally it becomes impossible to pursue justice or the public good; whoever plans for the long range or invests himself in other than narrowly selfish goals is bound to fail and merely makes a useless sacrifice. It is the vicious circle of a fragmented society that social contract theorists call "the state of nature" and modern sociology calls "amoral familism" or "the culture of poverty." [54] Oakeshott calls it "empirical politics," equating empiricism with "doing what one wants to do" at each particular moment.[55] For in the absence of ties to other people or to the past and future, the only possible goals are private and immediate. The result is "chaos modified by whatever consistency is allowed to creep into caprice." [56]

Oakeshott also calls this political style "the politics of the felt need," for it makes no allowance for needs existing but not yet felt, or not yet articulated, or not yet organized, for the needs of the future or of the powerless, or for goals that transcend need.[57] It makes no allowances, in Aristotelian terms, for going beyond the securing of life and to the pursuit of the good life.[58] Like Burke, Oakeshott believes that in the absence of traditional restraints, human beings are creatures of passion and impulse, and politics becomes a chaos of conflicting wills. And will is not a functional basis for politics. Politics requires a transition from the "assertive" to the "claiming mood," as Joseph Tussman has put it, from "I want" to "I am entitled to." [59] If this transition does not itself resolve conflict, it makes the resolution of conflict possible. But such a transition re-

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[49] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, pp. 22–23.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 73.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 23; here Oakeshott himself cites Burke.
[54] For instance, Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958).
[55] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 116. Note, however, that Oakeshott is here talking not about a particular style of politics but about an interpretation of all political activity. Note also the interesting consequence that the attempt to be Rationalistic results in "empiricism."
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[58] And Aristotle emphatically did *not* mean going beyond a minimally nutritional diet to two color television sets. Aristotle, *Politics*, Ernest Barker, trans. (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 5, 118.
[59] Joseph Tussman, *Obligation and the Body Politic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 78.

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quires a modicum of trust and stability in the first place; in an excessively fragmented society, where no one can effectively transcend "I want," outcomes will be determined by naked coercive power. That is why Oakeshott would agree with Burke that "neither the few nor the many," neither rulers nor ruled may act politically on the basis of will. Teach people that politics is about satisfying their appetites, and they are bound to teach their rulers to govern coercively and arbitrarily. "In that kind of game, in the end, the people are sure to be the losers." [60]

III

Oakeshott's alternative to these disasters, his vision of a healthy political life, is attractive in many ways, particularly when he leads us toward it by way of his understanding of continuity in a civilization. We see a happy, peaceful arrangement in which diversified individuals pursue their separate goals in their separate ways, and yet, without having to think or do much about it, they find that their private activity produces harmonious public results. Politics takes place near the surface of this deeply rooted life, making needed minor adjustments as conditions change, by referring to tradition for guidance. There is no real connection required between politics and community; politics is peripheral to the communal, significant life of the society, and is useful only for occasional repairs. Those who govern never need to exercise much power, for the small and partial actions they take are scarcely noticed by the governed; they are the gyroscope that keeps the ship of state on an even keel. The citizens, in turn, are content to be governed, for they have what they need, and feel no reason to question their way of life, the only one they know. There is occasion neither for deviance nor for doubt.

What, then, is wrong with this idyllic picture? Why should anyone but a misanthrope be suspicious of it? The sort of objections usually raised by Oakeshott's critics are: that he fails to realize that within any given society there can be many, sometimes conflicting traditions; that he falsely equates age with goodness, failing to see that some traditions are harmful; that for both these reasons the appeal to tradition provides no reliable guidance for actual political decisions.[61]

But it seems clear to me that Oakeshott does see the things his critics claim he fails to see. Oakeshott is fully aware that all societies contain multiple traditions, and that these are always to some extent in conflict. It is true, as Samuel Coleman points out, that Oakeshott moves ambiguously between using "tradition" to mean the entire cultural inheritance of a society, and using it to mean a particular strand in that inheritance—say, the tradition of the rule of law, or of *habeas corpus*—which may have implications that conflict with those of other particular traditions.[62] But aside from this confusion, Oakeshott is clearly aware that the traditions in our tradition are always "at once coherent and incoherent"; otherwise he could not possibly recommend the enhancing of coherence as the central task of political adjustments in tradition.[63]

Nor does Oakeshott believe that everything old or traditional is *ipso facto* good. He clearly recognizes that Rationalism itself has a history and has now become a tradition: in morality, one by which "we are for the most part dominated"; in politics, a "disease almost as old as the patient himself," the main "inspiration of political activity in Western Europe for the last two

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[60] Burke, "Appeal," in Stanlis, *op. cit.*, p. 536; Oakeshott, "Contemporary British Politics," p. 474.

[61] See for example, Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 72; Rees, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–71.

[62] Samuel Coleman, "Is there Reason in Tradition?" in Preston King and B. C. Parekh, eds., *Politics and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 249. But note how sensitively Oakeshott treats precisely this issue in relation to poetry; "Concept of a Philosophical Jurisprudence," p. 359.

[63] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 124.

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hundred years." [64] There is a "positive prejudice" in its favor, "in favor of the yet untried." [65] Oakeshott does not for a moment think that in directing us to tradition for political guidance, he is directing us to ready, unambiguous answers. But, as he points out, no general theoretical principle can provide specific, concrete guidance for particular decisions; the appeal to tradition is in this respect no different from natural law or utilitarianism or social contract doctrine or Marxism. All abstract principles need to be applied in concrete cases. And it is as vain in politics as in any other human activity, to hope for some sort of "mistake-proof manner of deciding what should be done." [66]

What Oakeshott is really saying when he directs us to "tradition" as a basis for political decisions seems to be threefold: First, *do not* introduce principles or institutions alien to the indigenous traditions. Second, strive always to enhance coherence within (among) the existing tradition(s); where the existing patterns conflict, act so as to reduce that conflict. Third, do not hope to find answers in any abstract principle, but immerse yourself in concrete knowledge of your community. Those concrete details *are* the tradition that is to be your guide; the guidance does not come as explicit general principles, but as implications, hints, fragments. Extrapolating a pattern from them is precisely the problem in finding the right political course; that *is* the "pursuit of intimations"; it is an art, not a science.

Nor is it true, then, that Oakeshott fails to see the potential conflict among traditions, or that the weakness of his theory is that it fails to give specific guidance for political action. Yet the critics are right to sense that there is something fundamentally wrong with Oakeshott's traditionalism in relation to political action. Perhaps we can begin to approach the problem by taking a closer look at Oakeshott's proposition that tradition and habit are the most reliable, or perhaps the only reliable security against tyranny and oppression. For it has more than a hint of the tautological about it: habit works well so long as it works well. Rational deliberations, action, innovation, sometimes work well and sometimes fail, as everyone knows. But tradition, as Oakeshott pictures it, never *fails to work;* it only breaks down, or ends. And for Oakeshott, although that is a calamity, it is never the fault of the tradition itself. Tradition breaks down when people stop following it; never because, although they follow it faithfully, it fails to work. The breakdown of inherited habit is most commonly the fault of false doctrine, of Rationalism; and of the causes of Rationalism Oakeshott tells us relatively little.[67] Tradition itself never fails; it is merely abandoned.

But this is not a fully accurate account of Oakeshott's position; he is more astute and subtle than consistent, and sometimes he can see with remarkable clarity the limitations of his own teachings. Thus, while he lauds the tenacious adaptability of healthy tradition, he is also able to see—particularly in nonpolitical contexts—its cardinal weakness: the tendency to ossification. In attacking political Rationalism, Oakeshott charges that it suffers from a "rigidity and fixity of character" which leaves it "without the power to correct its own short-comings." [68] All the Rationalist can do if his program fails is to replace it by another; he cannot modify, for everything is explicit and therefore irrevo-

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[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 75; "Scientific Politics," p. 350.
[65] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 174.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[67] What he says is that the growth of Rationalism in Europe has been owing primarily to the advent of newcomers into politics—new men, new nations, new classes—a topic we shall discuss below. In addition, some Rationalist philosophers occasionally gave "another turn to the screw." Otherwise, the causes are left obscure. Thus, insofar as Oakeshott discusses causes here, the threat to traditionalism came from the outsiders, not from any fault in the tradition. *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 29. Cf. Michael Oakeshott, "The Universities," *Cambridge Journal*, 2 (June 1949): 515–542, at 542.
[68] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 31.

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cable.[69] The politics of tradition and habit, by contrast, is "of course, pre-eminently fluid," just as habitual morality is distinguished by its "elasticity and its ability to suffer change without disruption." [70] Yet sometimes Oakeshott can also speak eloquently of the fatal flaw in tradition, its liability to become rigid and empty of meaning. A moral tradition originating in the powerful spiritual experience of one generation may well become pointless formality for the people of a later time; it may "degenerate into superstition." [71] There are difficulties about "translating" the original, charismatic spiritual experience "into a form in which it could be appreciated by those who had never shared the original inspiration"; they are in fact like newcomers in any enterprise who must learn doctrine abstractly, like a foreign language from a grammar.[72]

Oakeshott also recognizes that the preservation of tradition does depend on the objective quality of the inheritance. "If the present is arid, offering little or nothing to be used or enjoyed, then this inclination will be weak or absent." [73] Thus people are not likely to accept their inherited station and its duties indefinitely, if the tradition yields them nothing of real benefit. And traditions are liable to change in this respect, either because of their own internal drift, or because of a failure to adapt to changed social conditions. Oakeshott notes that even traditional institutions are subject to a kind of inertial drift that may totally alter their impact. "Arrangements which in their beginnings promoted a dispersion of power," for instance, "often, in the course of time, themselves become over-mighty or even absolute." [74]

Even more dangerous, however, is the characteristic inability of tradition to cope with crises. Though healthy tradition is more capable of adaptation than is Rationalism, Oakeshott acknowledges that this adaptation only works when change is limited and slow. The conservative must be ever watchful to make continuous small adaptations in his inherited institutions "while the evil is still small." [75] For a sudden or major social crisis may well demand a degree or velocity of adaptation greater than tradition can muster. The change tradition "admits is neither great nor sudden," Oakeshott says; so that its only defense lies in "its resistance to the conditions productive of crisis." [76] Once a major crisis has arisen—as he acknowledges at least in the realm of morality —tradition "has little power of recovery," precisely because it is inarticulate and unselfconscious, lacking "the power to criticize, to reform, and to explain itself." [77] But one must surely suppose that in politics the problem will be, if anything, even greater, for as Oakeshott stresses, politics is the sphere of change *par excellence*.

Tradition cannot defend itself except gradually and piecemeal, or it ceases to be a tradition. It cannot defend itself where it has no supporters, and it will not be supported by those whom it gives "little or nothing to be used or enjoyed." And even those who benefit from it cannot support it well, because they have given the matter no thought, have had no practice in deliberation and action. We will not be surprised, then, if the idyllic conditions of healthy habit that Oakeshott envisages are politically rare.

It is not merely that these idyllic conditions are an ideal of perfection that we may not be able to attain, but toward which we may strive. The problem with Oakeshott's teachings is not that he is an idealistic utopian. Rather, the problem seems to be that for most people in the modern world, the ideal is simply irrelevant. Oakeshott does not teach us how to create a traditional society;

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 65.
[77] *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 70; cf. p. 73.

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indeed, he does not think one can be deliberately created. And the advice to look to tradition and enhance coherence by pursuing intimations is simply meaningless where no worthwhile tradition exists. Of course there is a sense in which there are always traditions, humans being culture-animals. But even Oakeshott recognizes that not every tradition in *that* sense is an idyll worthy of conservation. Oakeshott simply has nothing to say to people without a tradition to preserve.

Consider, for example, a colony of the British Empire, perhaps in Africa or Asia, that is only an artificial administrative unit created without regard for former tribal boundaries. What would Oakeshott advise such a nation? Should it seek independence? And if it attains independence, how should it guide its political conduct? More than one tradition is available here, and very little hope of coherence; the traditions have conflicting implications, and none offers that natural harmony for which Oakeshott strives. Some of the available traditions, perhaps all, may even be hostile to the substantive qualities he cherishes in politics: liberty, the rule of law, free private enterprise. One might imagine Oakeshott advising such a people to cling to the Empire, or to return to their native, tribal traditions. But mostly he would have to give them non-advice: you are in a most unfortunate situation; there is nothing much you can do that will produce beneficial results.

This may, of course, be the truth. Still, it is instructive to look in somewhat greater detail. We have already encountered Oakeshott's view that abstract doctrines and formal institutions cannot successfully be exported to peoples unfamiliar with the tradition of inarticulate practice underlying those abstractions. Such a people is as helpless with its new paper constitution or new institutional system as a layman ignorant of mathematics is with a correct mathematical formula. Accordingly, Oakeshott maintains that British traditions of liberty and the rule of law cannot be successfully exported to uncivilized tribes in the form of ideology or legal formula; they are bound to be misunderstood. There is, of course, truth in this, but what alternative does Oakeshott envisage?

The alternative to technical education is apprenticeship; the alternative to a morality of explicit precepts is identification with an authoritative model. Just so with regard to liberty and the Empire: British tradition cannot be exported as ideology, but there is

> an alternative method: the method by which what is exported is the detail and not the abridgment of the tradition and the workmen travel with the tools—the method which made the British Empire. But it is a slow and costly method. And, particularly with men in a hurry, *l'homme à programme* with his abridgment wins every time; his slogans enchant, while the resident magistrate is seen only as a sign of servility.[78]

How does a theorist otherwise so astute and sensitive come wholly to miss the possibility that a colonized people might have good reasons for associating the resident British magistrate with oppression rather than liberty? What is it about Oakeshott's assumptions that renders him in such a context so incredibly blind?

Even Burke, whose vision was so much like Oakeshott's, saw more clearly with respect to empire, even if not clearly enough. And so, concerning British rule in India, Burke was able to see that whether the resident British magistrate can serve as a model of liberty or only as a symbol of oppression depends on his actual conduct and the principles it embodies, not on the political traditions of the country from which he comes.[79] But the problem forced him to argue on the ground of precisely the kind

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[78] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[79] See the section on Burke's role and views on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, in Stanlis, *op. cit.*, pp. 338–418.

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of abstract citation of God's justice independent of any embodying tradition, that he fundamentally opposed in Enlightenment thought. Oakeshott refuses to invoke any such Rationalistic concepts in support of his conservatism; he will not have recourse to natural law or divine purpose or any such "particular beliefs about the universe, about the world in general, or about human conduct in general." [80] If this limits the applicability of his theories to England and countries much like it, Oakeshott is content to accept that. The problems of other societies, he says, are questions that "we need not try to answer: we are concerned with ourselves as we are."[81] (But is an understanding of the realities of the British Empire not part of an accurate British self-knowledge?)

Oakeshott's doctrine obviously has quite similar limitations from the point of view of any oppressed minority in a country that does have a tradition of liberty. Or rather, recalling his example of women's suffrage enacted to complete a pattern already formed in most other respects, the doctrine holds out great hope for those minorities already privileged in most respects but excluded from a particular right. Their remaining claims should soon be fulfilled by the pursuit of what is intimated in the tradition. But no such hope is held out to those who presently lack all status in the society. For slaves, perpetuation of the tradition and enhanced coherence in it can only mean a systematization of their oppression. "Them as has, gits." Oakeshott's is not an attractive teaching for slaves, nor for anyone whom the tradition offers "little or nothing to be used or enjoyed."

The appeal to tradition, then, is useful only to the privileged, both in the sense that one must already be blessed with a healthy tradition in order to make such an appeal, and in the sense that only those already granted privileges by that tradition can expect further privileges from it. But there is a more serious and less obvious disadvantage to the traditionalist view. Even where healthy tradition is available, and even for those who already enjoy its benefits, there is something crucial missing from the picture: namely, genuine politics. And there are those in the tradition of political theory who would argue that this is the worst deprivation of all. But to see this, and how it is so, we shall have to go a more circuitous route.

IV

Oakeshott's conception of politics is profoundly influenced, it seems to me, by his distrust of the "politics of the felt need," his sense that passion, need, will, constitute dangerous threats to civility. And for him, as for Burke, that danger has specific historical embodiment in "uncivilized" social groups seeking admission to the political realm, and particularly in the poor, who carry with them the urgency of physical need. In this regard, Oakeshott's views are remarkably similar to those of Hannah Arendt, and of a whole tradition in political theory on which she draws, from Aristotle through Tocqueville, which fears that politics may well be destroyed through the intrusion of the poor.

Oakeshott links Rationalism directly with the problem of newcomers in politics. With its striving for uniformity and its ideological bent, Rationalism tends to insist on universal suffrage: one man, one vote. It urges the admission into politics of previously excluded strata. And, conversely, it is precisely those new to the political realm who need the Rationalistic style. Precipitated suddenly into the political arena without relevant experience, habit, or tradition, they must find guidance somewhere, and quickly. Rationalism seems to offer what they need, being "the politics of the book," a set of simple rules, an ideological abridgment, an easy "how to do it" course.[82] Thus, says Oake-

[80] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 183.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

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shott, the new ruler may find in Machiavelli's *Prince* a convenient set of maxims to guide his actions.[83] Similarly, a new nation, having no political traditions, may seek Rationalistic instruction from any available ideologist. Oakeshott's case in point is America, which began with "a specific and express rejection of tradition" and whose politics has been Rationalistic ever since.[84] Besides new rulers and new nations, Rationalism also appeals to strata of society newly emergent into public life. The predominant ideology of newly politicized classes in the last hundred years Oakeshott takes to be Marxism, "the most stupendous of our political Rationalisms . . . , for it was composed for the instruction of a less politically educated class than any other that has ever come to have the illusion of exercising political power." [85]

It is not that Oakeshott lacks sympathy with the sufferings of the poor; nor does he deny the realities of economic organization in modern society. He acknowledges that "from one point of view, property is a form of power, and an institution of property is a particular way of organizing the exercise of this form of power in a society." [86] Like all power, it limits the freedom, the choices, of those subject to it. A worker is not free, "unless there are many potential employers of his labour," unless he has genuine options; consequently, "wherever a means of production falls under the control of a single power, slavery in some measure follows." [87] Recognizing that the institutions of economic power are creatures of law, "not something that springs up of its own accord," [88] Oakeshott favors political intervention to suppress "private monopoly in all its forms," and where that is impossible, public operation of the enterprise.[89] Yet in the end he always opts for private property as "the institution of property most favourable to liberty, . . . for it is by this means only that the maximum diffusion of the power that springs from ownership may be achieved." [90] The prime modern danger is Socialist Collectivism, a concentration of power and a threat to freedom far greater than those constituted by any private economic abuse.

Oakeshott sympathizes with the suffering of the poor but fears their intervention in politics. The masses of the poor and uneducated are not fit to participate in political life. Politics, Oakeshott always maintains, is a conversation; but "the major part of mankind has nothing to say; the lives of most men do not revolve around a felt necessity to speak." [91] He does not mean, of course, that the major part of mankind has no needs. On the contrary, most are mere bundles of felt needs unenlarged and unrestrained by any tradition of civility. But the moral life of choice and responsibility "appears only where human behaviour is free from natural necessity," where there are genuine options.[92] The real needs of those who are pressed by necessity but are not fit to converse politically must of course be attended to, but not by their own political activity. As Burke said,

> The most poor, illiterate, and uninformed creatures upon earth are judges of a *practical* oppression. It is a matter of feeling; and as such persons generally have felt most of it, and are not of an overly-lively sensibility, they are the best judges of it. But for *the real cause,* or *the appropriate remedy,* they ought never to be called into council . . . because their reason is weak;

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[83] *Ibid.*, p. 25. Machiavelli himself knew better, Oakeshott says, and offered the new prince "not only his book, but also, what would make up for the inevitable deficiencies of his book—himself."
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 57.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 248.

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because, when once roused, their passions are ungoverned.[93]

Oakeshott accepts the universal adult suffrage that Burke could still oppose, but their views of political participation by the masses are the same.

Such views are, indeed, reminiscent of a tradition of political thought stemming at least from Aristotle and revived most recently by Arendt, that is concerned to protect the autonomy of politics from the onslaught of excluded social strata. All of the theorists in this tradition see political life as a distinctive form of human organization of special value, the locus of freedom and honor and full human development; but all of them also see it as hitherto restricted in membership, with access reserved to a propertied elite. Aristotle accepted this situation as natural. But with the intrusion of the masses into political action that began with the French Revolution, the problem of modernity became: can political participation and its attendant values of freedom and responsibility be extended to include all the members of a society, or must the intrusion of the masses, with their inappropriate orientations, necessarily destroy genuine political life?

The trouble with the poor, to put the views of Aristotle, Arendt, and Oakeshott in a nutshell, is that they are hungry. This means that they are creatures of appetite, "driven by the needs of their bodies," and therefore not free to make genuine moral and political choices.[94] Traditionally, from its invention in the Greek *polis,* free political life had presupposed the prior mastering of economic necessity; politics had been precisely the realm from which "everything merely necessary or useful" was "strictly excluded," where "no activity that served only the purpose of making a living, of sustaining only the life process, was permitted to enter." [95] Thus Aristotle maintained that a slave was by nature unsuited to be self-governing, and recommended the exclusion of mechanics and artisans from citizenship because of their inappropriate "spirit." [96]

But in the French Revolution, Arendt argues, this multitude of the poor and oppressed, traditionally excluded from the public realm and kept "hidden in darkness and shame," began for the first time "to doubt that poverty is inherent in the human condition," began, that is, to regard their needs as a political issue.[97] They "burst onto the scene" of history for the first time as a political force, introducing into politics the very element of physical appetite, of economic necessity, previously considered antithetical to it. "The public realm—reserved, as far as memory could reach, to those who *were* free, namely carefree of all worries that are connected with life's necessity, with bodily needs," was now to "offer its space and light to this immense majority who are not free because they are driven by daily needs." [98] Arendt thinks that this was what destroyed the French Revolution, made it unable to be a genuine foundation of political liberty for the majority. For the need of the poor "was violent and, as it were, prepolitical"; it drove them, until "freedom had to be surrendered to necessity, to the urgency of the life process itself." [99] Knowing only the endlessness of physical labor and the endless pressure of hunger and physical need, the *animal laborans* demanded food instead of freedom, happiness instead of honor. As a result, even in our modern abundance, we now lack genuine politics and political free-

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[93] Burke, "Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe," in Stanlis, *op. cit.*, p. 257.
[94] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1965), p. 54.

[95] Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 25, 29, 34.
[96] Aristotle, *op. cit.*, pp. 3, 9–18, 35, 107–113, 118–120, 300–303.
[97] Arendt, *Human Condition,* p. 195; *On Revolution,* p. 54.
[98] Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 41.
[99] *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 54; cf. *Human Condition,* pp. 58, 74.

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dom; under the pressure of the poor, we have achieved plenty but lost liberty.[100]

This is a distressing doctrine, for on the one hand it means that the great values offered by political life are by their nature confined to a wealthy elite, so that the great majority of mankind is condemned to exclusion from self-government and full human development. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe in the great value that theorists like Aristotle, Tocqueville, and Arendt attach to political life, if, by definition, it is impotent to deal with the real needs of most people. One wants to object: no wonder the political debates of those aristocrats were above mere economics and devoted to "higher things"; they helped themselves to what they needed economically outside of politics, by forcibly excluding from the political realm those who needed to raise economic questions. What is so noble about that picture?

But the problem is more complicated. For of course it is not true that the poor, and only the poor, are "driven by economic, physical necessity." Even a moment's thought about historical fact can show us that there is virtually no physical necessity so dire that it totally destroys the human will, the capacity for choice. Even in the concentration camp, some shared their tiny ration of bread. And when the poor burst into the political arena their demands were not, in fact, merely for bread; they demanded dignity and justice for all mankind. As Arendt knows, the early organizations of workers and the poor were the only group "which not only defended its economic interests but fought a full-fledged *political* battle." [101] And as she also knows, it was not the poor themselves who, driven by the iron law of their physical need, demanded of the French Revolution an economic largesse which it could not give. It was in fact the revolutionary governments, "neither of the people nor by the people," who took action in the name of the hungry, out of pity.[102] But pity is not an insurmountable, physical, causal necessity; it is a policy position, chosen as freely or unfreely as any other, and in this case by men who themselves ate regularly.

Neither poverty nor urgent need disqualifies people from free political participation; nor does the introduction of lowly economic issues into the political realm destroy it. Economic issues have always appeared in the political realm—even, or especially, in the Greek *polis*. What is required for free, genuine political life is neither a certain class status nor a certain subject-matter but a certain spirit, and that spirit is not the automatic prerogative of any social group. What Aristotle and Tocqueville, Arendt and Oakeshott really fear and oppose in politics is a short-sightedly utilitarian, narrowly selfish, crassly competitive orientation.[103] And that orientation in fact was not introduced into politics after 1789 by the raging, hungry masses, but by the bourgeoisie.

It "entered the public realm" in the "disguise of an organization of property-owners" who, instead of claiming access to the traditional values of political participation, sought

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[100] Arendt, *Human Condition,* p. 115. Arendt blames Marx for bringing the spirit of "labor" into the political arena where only "action" is appropriate. This may be very similar to what Oakeshott means when he accuses Marxism of bringing to politics an ideology that is an abridgment of non-political activity and hence "inappropriate on account of the irrelevance of the activity from which it has been abstracted." Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 121.

[101] Arendt, *Human Condition,* p. 195.

[102] Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 69; cf. pp. 68–94 *passim.*

[103] I say "really fear" in order to give them all the benefit of every doubt. For some, like Tocqueville, this is obviously true. Arendt seems more contradictory; sometimes she seems to stress that the point is consciousness, yet the idea of the pressure of causal, physical necessity is central to her argument. One suspects that her animus against Marxist totalitarianism may account for some of the discrepancies.

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from it "protection . . . for the accumulation of more wealth." [104] It is not physical hunger but the spiritual hunger of the Protestant Ethic, of the acquisitive self, of status anxiety in the face of an unpredictable market; it is in fact the spirit of a newly developing capitalism that threatens the autonomy of political life and liberty. It is the reduction of politics to a mere means toward other—acquisitive and particularistic—goals that destroys it. As Tocqueville said, "the man who asks of freedom anything other than itself is born to be a slave." [105] But that man, as was perfectly clear to Tocqueville by 1850, was not the starving worker but the shopkeeper, "the middle class, which . . . treated government like a private business, each member thinking of public affairs only in so far as they could be turned to his private profit," until the government "took on the features of a trading company." [106] The result was a total absence of real political life in the supposedly "political" institutions; nothing there but "languor, impotence, immobility and boredom." But outside the official system, in the streets and among the lower classes "an attentive observer could easily see from certain feverish and irregular symptoms that political life was beginning to find expression." [107] What stirred there was a real political life, not because it was free of economic need, but because it combined the demand for bread with the demand for dignity, because it transformed economic need into a question of justice.

The supposed dominion of biological need that makes people unfree and certain questions unsuitable to politics is in reality always largely a question of consciousness. In the French Revolution the previously dominant understanding of what was inevitable was called into question; poverty was made into a political— that is, an actionable—issue. That is part of what it means to say, as we did earlier, that political theory attempts to define the interface between what must be accepted as necessary and what can be altered through active intervention. Consciousness and activity are circular here, and interact. What we perceive as natural and necessary, we will not act to change; but at the same time, our perceptions are shaped by our activity. We feel helpless in proportion as we remain passive. As Arendt herself sees, the "fateful automatism" of physical necessity, of the "biological process," will "assert itself" more forcefully "the less we are doing ourselves, the less active we are." [108] Thus, in the end, as she remarks in a casual parenthesis, "to have a society of laborers, it is of course not necessary that every member actually be a laborer or a worker . . . but only that all members consider what they do primarily as a way to sustain their own lives and those of their families." [109]

It was this realization that the givenness of necessity depends to some extent on consciousness, and consciousness in turn is shaped by our activity, that gave Tocqueville hope. What he saw in America was the possibility that the narrowly selfish acquisitiveness, the fragmentation and competitiveness that characterized the great middle-class economy of the future might—just possibly might—be educated to the political spirit the older aristocracy had known, through active participation in democratic self-government. But the task is difficult, for the only language in which one can appeal to the bourgeois, in which he himself can conceptualize what he experiences in political activity, is the language of utilitarian self-

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[104] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 60.
[105] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, Stuart Gilbert, trans. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), p. 169.
[106] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*, George Lawrence, trans., J. P. Mayer and A. P. Kerr, eds. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), p. 6.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[108] Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 53.
[109] Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 42.

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interest. But that way of conceptualizing the world is itself the disease; it can't be the cure. So Tocqueville strives to hold a delicate balance, avoiding the preaching of a civic duty empty of any real, personal meaning, and the pessimistic constitutionalism of, say, a James Madison which attempts to harness narrowly selfish men to an institutional machine that will produce the public good despite their intentions and without changing their character. Aristotle and Arendt faced much the same ambiguities. Aristotle certainly seems to have abandoned hope for the transforming of artisans or slaves into citizens; yet it is he who stresses the educational nature of political participation itself, the extent to which only that activity can fully develop human potential. And Arendt, though she cannot hope as Tocqueville did, since the institutions of political participation that he saw have largely disappeared into a vast bureaucracy, nevertheless does hope, insisting on our capacity even now to change, to choose, to act.

And what of Oakeshott (to return from this excursion into the politics of poverty)? Like other theorists discussed here, Oakeshott fears and opposes the introduction into politics of the spirit appropriate to economic activity and contractual relationships:

> those of producer and consumer, master and servant, principal and assistant—each participant seeks some service or recompense for service, and if it is not forthcoming the relationship lapses or is terminated.[110]

Such relationships and activities contrast with others, like friendship, pursued for their intrinsic value, and in which the other participants are valued for themselves rather than as a means to some other end. But as we shall see, Oakeshott is profoundly ambivalent about how to classify politics in this regard. Though as anxious to protect it against the utilitarian spirit as any of the theorists in this tradition, he does not value it for its own sake, as they do. He would like it to be an end-in-itself like friendship, yet he fears the intrinsic values that they ascribe to active citizenship almost as much as he fears the utilitarian spirit. As a result, his teachings come in the end to resemble the utilitarian-liberal tradition with its minimal, caretaker conception of government, much more than he is aware or would wish.

V

The desire to protect political life against a crassly acquisitive, narrowly selfish utilitarian spirit is only one in a cluster of concerns that Oakeshott shares with Aristotle, Tocqueville, and Arendt (as well as, frequently, with Machiavelli and Burke). Together, these concerns make up much of what is valuable, but usually ignored, in Oakeshott's political theory. They range far beyond a mere stress on tradition as we have discussed it, and they deserve more detailed exploration.

Oakeshott's favorite metaphor for understanding political life is that of conversation. Political education, he says, means learning to participate in a conversation; and politics itself is a conversation, sometimes among past, present, and future, sometimes among governors and governed, or among social groupings.[111] It is not difficult to see why the metaphor attracts him: conversation is a relationship of plurality and mutuality, of self-development. There must be at least two participants, perhaps more; and all of the participants matter to the conversation. In a good conversation, all participate in the gradual revelation of a shared truth, but probably differing from the initial position taken by any of them. It is a matter of "exploring the intimations" of initial positions, laying bare their implications and modifying them cooperatively. Each participant therefore learns about his own views

[110] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 243; cf. p. 176.

[111] *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 311, 129, 41, 43; cf pp. 124, 133–136.

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in the process, learns to see himself in the mirror of the conversation.[112] And more is learned in the course of the conversation than any statement of the "conclusion" reached could possibly convey to one who was not present. Indeed, the point is the process, not the conclusion.

Moreover, conversation is a relationship of personal freedom and harmony without coercion, which continues only as the participants persuade each other. One participant may be more persuasive or better informed than others and may prevail for a time, but "none permanently dominates." [113] It is not a question of who will "win," but of mutual participation in a shared development. Oakeshott stresses that a conversation is not an argument: the relations in a conversation "are not those of assertion and denial but . . . of acknowledgment and accommodation," of "oblique recognition." [114]

The metaphor thus illuminates what we already noted in Oakeshott's sociological vision of human community: a profound concern for individual development, for opportunity and personal freedom, together with an appreciation of rootedness and mutual responsibility. He sees that we should not have to choose between individuality and community, that true personal development and true *Gemeinschaft* enhance each other. And this sociological insight has its counterpart in Oakeshott's specifically political doctrine, in his profound awareness that a fundamental plurality and mutuality is essential to politics. Like Aristotle and Arendt, Oakeshott refuses to identify political rule over citizens with mere force, domination, the management of slaves, or the fabrication of objects. He insists that political rule is a relationship, if not among equals—since we know that people are always unequal in power, wealth, ability, character—at least among peers whose views are mutually relevant to their shared enterprise. The metaphor of conversation clearly implies that politics is a matter of persuasion rather than coercion, and that it is not enough for the needs of a subject creature to be cared for, that administrative efficiency is not enough to constitute a political relationship.

The metaphor further shows the extent to which Oakeshott shares the conviction of Aristotle or Arendt that politics always presupposes a prior tradition of basic agreement, a "public forum." Such a forum is not, of course, a physical place—though the *agora* was certainly a constitutive element in Greek political life—but the organization of people in a public, political way.[115] Only where people are already bound by some minimal ties of reciprocity and civility is a political relationship possible at all, as an alternative to domination and naked force. Conversation presupposes a shared language and a shared recognition of something worth talking about, as well as a willingness to *talk* rather than fight.

Oakeshott also shares with the theorists in this tradition a healthy realism and skepticism about what is possible in politics. He teaches us to distrust the pretensions of the "social engineer" who offers allegedly easy solutions to our vexing public problems, claiming with pseudo-authority that they are "scientific" solutions.[116] Oakeshott sees that political issues are precisely those that lack technical solutions of this kind, and that the imposition of a vision of order on a society in the name of "The" correct solution destroys the mutuality essential to political life. There is no final solution or ultimate goal in politics; like human life itself, it is continual, restless activity. Success is "sporadic and uncertain, something which has to be achieved

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[112] As in education one learns to "recognize" oneself in "the mirror of" one's civilization; *ibid.*, p. 304.
[113] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[114] *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 311.
[115] "Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*," the Greeks said to the colonists they sent out. Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 177. The concern for a public forum within which persuasion can replace force is also a central theme in Thucydides.
[116] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 4.

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from day to day and is never complete or unqualified." [117] The process of mutual adjustment among human beings is endless. One must be content with partial and limited, which is to say, with *human* achievements. Thus, like Burke, Aristotle, and Arendt, Oakeshott argues for the importance of limits in politics. He is intensely aware that there are real, concrete human lives at stake; and, like Albert Camus, he insists that present suffering must never be lightly justified in the name of some abstract vision of the future.[118]

In sum, Oakeshott joins the other theorists of this tradition in offering a vision of politics that is nonutilitarian; that seeks individuality within *Gemeinschaft;* that stresses mutuality, the need for a public arena, the importance of limits; that is realistically skeptical of easy or technical answers. But at a number of central points in this configuration of doctrine, Oakeshott's views are also strikingly different from those of the other theorists in this tradition; and the character of those differences is crucial.

Take, for example, the shared suspicion of narrowly utilitarian motives in politics, the fear that political life may be destroyed by the intrusion of a merely contractual spirit. And take their correlated skeptical realism, their suspicion of easy or technical "solutions." In all the theorists of this tradition other than Oakeshott these elements are bound together by an understanding of politics as the potential locus of human greatness. What they want to protect against the shopkeeper's or "household" spirit is the possibility of human transcendence, what Tocqueville called "great politics," Machiavelli "glory," and the Greeks immortality. This possibility was what Aristotle meant in calling man a political animal—a creature that fulfills itself in politics, whose full human development can only take place through participation in *polis* citizenship. Not that every citizen would be a hero and become personally immortal; but only active participation in collective decisions about what the community was to do and be could enlarge the narrow and private self, make human beings fully aware of their capacity to choose and their nonimmediate connections to others.

But Oakeshott, though his metaphor of conversation implies that self-development is an essential ingredient of politics, is not really willing to accept that implication. When he considers universal political participation, he considers it as a duty rather than a right or need or condition of self-development. And even as a duty, he rejects it. For our private activities make just as much of a contribution to the great, underlying stream of our civilization as any explicitly political action; "nothing we do is unconnected with the life of our society, no activity is private in the sense of being without its place or context in the corporate social life." [119] It does not matter that in our private-social activities we are not conscious of their public significance, of alternative choices, of our responsibility for public consequences. It does not matter that "the lives of most men do not revolve around a felt necessity to speak"; this is seen as a fact useful for social stability, not a failure in human development.

Oakeshott is not trying to save politics from petty purposes in order to free it (or us) for great ones; he would prefer to eliminate purpose from politics altogether. All other theorists in this tradition see that in the absence of final or technical solutions, politics always involves risk; that political life requires energy, courage, even heroism. But Oakeshott, although he does at one point mock "those who have lost their nerve," and characterizes his vision of politics as *"nur für die Schwindelfreien,"* never intends more than intellectual courage—the courage to

[117] Oakeshott, "Scientific Politics," p. 347.
[118] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 49; Albert Camus, *The Rebel,* Anthony Bower, trans. (New York: Random House, 1956).
[119] Michael Oakeshott, "The Claims of Politics," *Scrutiny* 8 (September 1939): 146–151, at 147.

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give up "false hopes." [120] He emphatically does not mean that politics should be the locus of courage in action, let alone heroism or the pursuit of glory. Though he will not have politics conducted in a narrowly utilitarian spirit, he does not share the traditional alternative, and will not have it conducted in the heroic spirit either. For him, politics is and healthy politics must be a "secondary activity," of what our newspapers would today call "low profile." [121] Its task is never more than the adjudication of conflicts between private individuals or groups, together with those minor and surface adjustments that need to be made from time to time in the great, underlying tide of the society's habitual life. Oakeshott's vision is one in which people have more valuable things to do with their time than this useful but unattractive "attending to arrangements." They are busy with other enterprises, their myriad private pursuits; and they come to politics only when they happen to "have nothing better to think about," or when they have some concrete, practical grievance that needs attention.[122] Healthy political activity is "repair," the appropriate normal attitude toward politics is one of "indifference"; the appropriate role for government is "not the management of an enterprise," but the coordination "of those engaged in a great diversity of self-chosen enterprises." [123] Its task is not "to make men good or even better." [124] Thus Oakeshott agrees with the utilitarian liberals he otherwise criticizes that government is an "umpire," and freedom means being left to do as one likes in one's privacy. Politics is "a limited activity, a necessary but second-rate affair." [125]

Even Burke, fearful as he was of passion, gave politics more weight and dignity than that. To sense the difference, we need only contrast the connotations of Oakeshott's favorite concept of "conversation" with those of its counterpart in Burke, almost never used by Oakeshott: "deliberation." [126] Deliberation suggests gravity, serious issues, statesmen and judgment, and the intention that at the end of the talking, action will commence. Conversation, by contrast, implies a less directed, less purposeful but perhaps more pleasurable talking, enjoyed for its own sake and for what it will reveal rather than for any agreement in which it may conclude. Oakeshott really does think about politics in terms of conversation rather than deliberation (let alone any more strident activity), in terms of the pleasant, somewhat idle but also valuable, civilized talk of university dons over their afternoon sherry. No wonder he thinks that those with strident demands would have "nothing to say" in such a conversation.

For Oakeshott, what is inappropriate to politics is anything that smacks of passion, zeal, commitment, heroism, or the pursuit of perfection. These do have their value, as he concedes with some reluctance, but only in the private lives of individual persons. The pursuit of perfection is

> both impious and unavoidable in human life. It involves the penalties of impiety (the anger of the gods and social isolation), and its reward is not that of achievement but that of having made the attempt. It is an activity therefore, suitable for individuals, but not for societies.[127]

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[120] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 127.
[121] *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 192; cf. "Claims of Politics," p. 148.
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 196.
[123] *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 195, 189.
[124] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
[125] Oakeshott, "Contemporary British Politics," p. 486; cf. p. 489.

[126] Oakeshott does speak of "deliberation" once, in Michael Oakeshott, "Political Laws and Captive Audiences," in *Talking to Eastern Europe*, G. R. Urban, ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), pp. 292, 295 (thus actually twice).
[127] Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, p. 59. It is characteristic that Oakeshott identifies heroism with attempting to do the impossible; he gives no attention to intermediate cases such as a heroic attempt to do something difficult and unlikely, that might just

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An individual who strives heroically for the impossible may be willing to pay the penalty, or he may recant and be taken back into an "understanding and forgiving society." But for a political community, the pursuit of ideals has as its penalty "a chaos of conflicting ideals, the disruption of a common life." [128] In politics, therefore, we must be "unadventurous," must never "buckle on armour and seek dragons to slay," and and should have no love for "what is dangerous and difficult; . . . no impulse to sail uncharted seas." [129]

Oakeshott's aversion to heroic politics is reflected also in still another striking difference between his views and those of the theorists we have been discussing. We saw that he shares with them a stress on mutuality in politics, a distinction between political rule and domination, and a consequent stress on the need for a political arena—a framework of law or institutions, a tradition of civility—within which politics becomes possible. All of the theorists in this tradition other than Oakeshott are led by such concerns to problems of founding, to questions of how such an arena can be created among men and how, once created, it can be maintained. For Aristotle as for Arendt, the prepolitical and essentially violent act of founding necessarily underlies the life of any *polis;* for Machiavelli, Heaven can offer no greater opportunity for glory than the founding of a new polity or the revivification of one that has decayed into corruption; and for Machiavelli as for Tocqueville, that revivification, the task of maintaining a public forum once it has been founded, depends on conflict and action.

But Oakeshott refuses to think of tradition as *founded* at all; he essentially wants to deny that human beings have the capacity for large-scale or collective creation, for any but artistic creation.[130] In his view, all tradition originates in the unknown recesses of past history, as the unplanned product of countless uncoordinated private choices. And Oakeshott is in the end unable to give any account of how a tradition, once created, might be preserved or protected under attack. He cannot or will not follow a Tocqueville or a Machiavelli here, for he fears too much the destructive potential of the forces their solutions enlist.

VI

Perhaps it is not inappropriate to approach the nature of this deficiency in Oakeshott's theory by way of a psychological analysis, particularly since he is almost as much concerned with education and morality as with government. That there is a psychic component in the conservative's anxiety about the careful preservation of the past is no secret, being revealed most clearly in Burke's unselfconscious (because pre-Freudian) metaphors. Burke always insists that our inherited institutions, the legacy of our fathers, must be regarded as we regard the fathers themselves, in order to give "to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood," to bind up "the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties." [131] These institutions are, as Socrates already pointed out, our true parents, raising and forming us; and like parents, they are mortal.[132] If you challenge them, you endanger

succeed. Cf. Michael Oakeshott, *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), p. xii, where "regretting our civilization" is identified as a "fruitless, if heroic, act."

[128] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 59.

[129] *Ibid.,* pp. 172–173.

[130] An excellent discussion of alternative conceptions of tradition, including traditions with heroic founders, is contained in J. G. A. Pocock, "Time, Institutions and Action: An Essay on Traditions and Their Understanding," in King and Parekh, *op. cit.*

[131] Burke, *Reflections,* p. 38.

[132] Plato, *Crito,* 50.

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your parents; if you care for them tenderly, you are cherishing your parents.

> We have consecrated the state, that no man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution; . . . that he should approach to the faults of the state as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude. By this wise prejudice we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds and wild incantations they may regenerate the paternal constitution and renovate their father's life.[133]

The real danger is parricide, and the profundity of that danger is correlated to the depths of men's hidden hatred of authority, constantly pressing for release within them. That hidden hatred is so powerful and so dangerous that one must guard against it at every step. A rebellious thought is as wicked as the deed; it is best not even to approach and look; thoughts can kill.

All that stands between us and our murderous passion against those we love and need is the acquired habit of traditional behavior, of non-thought. Once you begin to question authority, you undermine the "wise prejudices" and "pleasing illusions" that sustain civilization.[134] But implicit in such expressions clearly is the assumption that civilization depends upon illusions, not on real benefits; that in the absence of a repressive conscience, our love could not restrain the passion of our hate; that the continuing resolution of conflict and reintegration of ambivalence cannot be relied upon to prevent disaster.

Oakeshott, of course, does not talk of parricide. Nor is this only because our post-Freudian sophistication precludes such naively obvious self-exposure. In an important sense, there are no fathers in Oakeshott's world, as there still were in Burke's. For Burke, there was a reliable, wealthy, powerful ruling class, a "natural aristocracy" suited to govern and take care of the child-like masses. Oakeshott's thought, by contrast, moves in a world where fathers have become faceless nonentities; his conservatism is of necessity a doctrine for a democracy in which none is to be trusted to rule. That is why conversation has replaced deliberation. But one can hate an absent or faceless or ineffectual father as much as a powerful one—hate him, indeed, partly for his very ineffectuality. And the resulting fear of being overwhelmed by powerful destructive passions can be just as compelling.[135]

What Oakeshott does say—and it is interesting and revealing enough—is that our identity, our very selves depend entirely on the preservation of continuity with the past. Whether for an individual or for a community, the new always presents itself as a threat to selfhood, against which defensive action must be taken. "Change is a threat to identity," Oakeshott says, "and every change is an emblem of extinction."[136] Thus the conservative is one who is "strongly disposed to preserve his identity." And though Oakeshott recognizes the inevitability of change, that "a man's identity (or that of a community) . . . is not a fortress into which we may retire," but must be expressed in continual activity, still that activity is conceived as defensive, to protect the endangered self "against the hostile forces of change."[137]

The image is as interesting for what it

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[133] Burke, *Reflections,* pp. 109–110; cf. Edmund Burke, "Speech on the Representation of the Commons in Parliament," in Stanlis, *op. cit.,* p. 336.
[134] Burke, *Reflections,* p. 87.

[135] It may, however, be a fear of the (earlier) engulfing mother; the psychologists disagree on the matter. See Philip E. Slater, *The Glory of Hera* (Boston: Beacon, 1968) and the psychological references cited therein; as well as the work of Melanie Klein. On changes in authority, see John H. Schaar, "Legitimacy in the Modern State," in *Power and Community,* Philip Green and Sanford Levinson, eds. (New York: Random House, 1970).
[136] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 170.
[137] *Ibid.,* p. 171.

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omits as for what it says. It does not even allow the possibility that change might also enhance or develop the self, that change is opportunity, that a self without challenges must either invent some or atrophy. Growth *is* a threat to the old self; Oakeshott is not wrong about that. But it is also a source of the new self, and this aspect he totally neglects. Oakeshott says that conservatism is likely to appear in politics wherever the present inheritance is valued but perceived as threatened. Similarly, conservatism is psychologically likely "wherever a firm identity has been achieved, and wherever identity is felt to be precariously balanced." [138] Yet there seems to be an incongruity between the latter two conditions: a firm identity does not always experience change as a threat but sometimes as an opportunity. Oakeshott's image of selfhood is one in which the ego is relatively weak, and only a severe superego keeps passion in check; it is an image of anxiety and defense, in which every novelty is a danger because a temptation, and the very thought of challenging the authority of the past threatens inner stability. Someone who would be self-conscious must first "be certain of his ability to defend" his principles, "for having been brought into the open, they will henceforth be liable to attack." [139]

Accordingly, when Oakeshott considers primary and secondary education—"school education," as he calls it—his attitude toward the children is much like his political attitude toward the mass of the citizenry. Like the mass of ordinary people, school children do not have "anything significant to say," nor any reliable judgment about what is important to them. Hence what is taught in school "must be capable of being learned without any previous recognition of ignorance," and "at school we are, quite properly, not permitted to follow our own inclinations." [140] Oakeshott has no confidence that there might be something in the child's own innermost needs that drives it toward learning, toward growth, and which might be enlisted in the aid of school education. For Oakeshott, what is natural, the real, inner, passionate self, is always resistant and murderous; authority therefore means restraint.[141]

With respect to higher education, Oakeshott gives us two contrasting models: that of training and that of apprenticeship. The former is much like school education, but narrowly specialized. It produces technicians who can apply but not create, who are good at efficient means but do not question goals. But though apprenticeship is meant to contrast with such training, to produce people capable of creating and criticizing independently, yet there is no place in Oakeshott's world for people with this capacity. There is no place for them, at least, outside art and academia, no place in the realm of actions as distinct from thought.

We might put the matter in terms of Jean Piaget's analysis of the development of judgment in children.[142] The small child, though it does not yet (fully) know the substantive content of the rules, practices, institutions that surround it, regards them as timeless. Similarly, it regards its parents as eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent. As it grows older it learns not only the substantive content of its civilization, but also about how rules and practices are established and can be changed by human beings in historical time, human beings like its parents and itself. From this perspective, maturity has to do with becoming aware of one's own role, one's own responsibility in upholding, transmitting, changing, or replacing inherited institutions and values. Maturity means becoming a "master" rather than either an apprentice or a trained technician.

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[138] *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 173.
[139] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[140] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

[141] But note that Oakeshott disclaims any presupposition of natural human depravity; *ibid.*, pp. 183, 189.
[142] Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, Marjorie Gabain, trans. (New York: Collier, 1962).

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Although Oakeshott is concerned with a form of higher education that will prepare people to become mature masters in the spheres of culture and intellect; in the realm of action, for instance in politics and morality, he prefers that there be no actual living masters, no mature actors at all.[143] In that realm we are *never* to regard our institutions and practices as the historical product of fallible human beings like ourselves; we are never to see our own responsibility, our own choice in relation to those institutions. We are to remain in a lifelong apprenticeship to past generations. As Burke suggested, we are to regard those institutions as if they *were* our parents, our masters to whom we are apprenticed.

Various critics have charged that such a position is fatal to creativity and progress. Neal Wood, for example, in his excellent article on Oakeshott, insists on the vital necessity that at least "sometimes we emancipate ourselves from the past and confront the present in its own terms." [144] But though the criticism of Oakeshott is valid, Wood's way of putting it fails to get at the reason for Oakeshott's position. For a reference to "emancipation" from the past plays directly into Oakeshott's characterization of the Rationalist as someone who (falsely) perceives the past as an oppressive burden. Wood merely reinforces the dichotomy Oakeshott has assumed between the past as an encumbrance constraining us, and the past to be revered and served like a parent. But it is this dichotomy that must be called into question if we are to understand what is missing from Oakeshott's account.

What is missing, in psychoanalytic terms, is any conception of sublimation as distinct from repression, of ego functions, and therefore of genuinely mature mastery. Oakeshott in effect sees only the repressive superego and rebellious id. And if those are the only alternatives, then indeed both civilization and the very existence of a self depend on rejecting the latter and guarding the former against it. Only, there is then no joy in that choice, no real reason for making it; since, conceived that way, the choice can yield no real gratification, can be only duty and never pleasure. Successful sublimation, however, a psyche organized around a strong ego, defies the kind of dichotomization that Oakeshott assumes. It is neither a matter of "obeying" the past, our parents, the superego, nor of "emancipation" from them, but of *being* an integrated self which contains within it those aspects of the past which it values, and uses them to master and change those aspects of past, present, and its own impulses which it does not value. This does mean control of the id, for the sake of real gratification and a developed, individuated self. It does mean restraint, authority, and the internalization of norms, but not as mere duty owed to some external other—rather, as genuinely desired by the integrated self. It is a terrible mistake —though not uncommon today—to identify the real self with the id; the id is not a viable, individuated, developed person at all. As Oakeshott himself indicates, there is a difference between ourselves and our appetites.[145]

It is not easy to express without paradox the relationship we bear to our parents and our past in a condition of maturity so conceived. For, as both Freud and Nietzsche saw, someone who rejects his past (rejects it, that is, *in the wrong way,* denies and represses it) remains its captive. In that sense Oakeshott is right: there is such a thing as the Rationalist who rejects history and claims to construct all anew in the present, to be as it were father to himself, in order to deny his real father. That is surely part of what Oakeshott means when he calls the conception of a "self-made" man or a "self-made" society "idolatry." [146] Using Wood's words we might say that such a person is so busy

[143] But note that he explicitly claims that in politics we are adults, not children; *Rationalism,* p. 187.
[144] Wood, *op. cit.,* p. 662.
[145] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 114; cf. p. 48.
[146] *Ibid.,* p. 35.

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continually "emancipating" himself from the past, which he nevertheless cannot shed, that he has no energy to spare for "confronting the present in its own terms."

But someone who has genuinely come to terms with his past, with his parents—who has, as Nietzsche would say, successfully "digested" the past, integrating what is valuable to him into his self—such a person can "forget about" the past in a different sense; having remembered and acknowledged it he can then be really through with it and free of it, though it continues in him.[147] He has stopped being either trainee or apprentice and has become a master, free for action.

Sometimes, in his best moments, Oakeshott seems to see this. Sometimes, indeed, he sounds remarkably like Nietzsche, praising "the unself-conscious" morality of aristocrats that is nothing more than their natural "habit of behaviour in relation to one another," handed on through implicit identification, "in a true moral education." [148] Like Nietzsche, too, but also like Hegel and Marx and Freud, Oakeshott is profoundly concerned to produce in us the recognition of who, in particular, we are; the acceptance of our particular history, our particular community, our particular, concrete, historical circumstances *as* our own. "The proper starting place" is "not in the empyrean, but with ourselves as we have come to be." [149] Thus political education, in particular, requires "knowledge, as profound as we can make it, of our tradition of political behaviour" a knowledge specific and concrete, "municipal, not universal." [150]

Unfortunately, like Hegel but unlike the other great teachers of self-knowledge, Oakeshott insists that we recognize and accept the given as necessary not just with respect to our past, but with respect to the future as well (which is to say, with respect to the conduct of our lives in the present). But as Freud saw, insight is to liberate us for action; as Nietzsche urged, the point in "digesting" the past is to free the will for creating a future; as Marx argued, once we understand the world, the point is to change it. For all of them, acceptance of the self and of past history matters because it is a prerequisite for free and effective action in the present, into the future. For Oakeshott, it is cultivated as a substitute for, an avoidance of such action.

VII

In the end, Oakeshott misses or denies what is distinctive about politics, and this failure accounts for most of what is problematic in his thought. His vision omits the very stuff of political life, problematic but essential: power, interest, collective action, conflict. Oakeshott correctly refuses to equate politics with the efficient administration of things, with the acquisitive utilitarian bargaining of "rational economic man," with the domination of masters imposed upon slaves by naked force. But he does want to assimilate politics to the habitual drift of a society or culture that is full of private, piecemeal activity but passive at the collective level and in which no one takes responsibility for the whole. Such a picture is not inaccurate about certain kinds of human endeavor, about language or about art. It may even be a complete and accurate account of the collective, public life of certain societies—say, a relatively isolated tribal group with a simple technology living under highly stable conditions. But of such a tribe we shall want to say precisely that it lacks politics. Political life has to do with precisely those concerns that are made into issues for public action, that are not permitted to drift or emerge from uncoordinated private conduct. Issues like religion, or prices, or race are not by nature, *a priori,* either political or nonpolitical; they are made or become political in certain times and places. And that means that in those times and places they are lifted

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[147] See particularly Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* Walter Kaufmann, trans. (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 225, 229.
[148] Oakeshott, *Rationalism,* p. 35.
[149] *Ibid.,* p. 184.
[150] *Ibid.,* pp. 128, 129,

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out of unplanned drift and placed on the political agenda as conscious, collective concerns. And though Oakeshott is right to insist that political action is always undergirded by a prior, inarticulate political culture, still, that culture only undergirds political action. It is not, itself, politics. Oakeshott's political theory rests in reality on the implicit recommendation that we minimize politics as much as possible—ideally that we eliminate it altogether or conduct it in a nonpolitical way, like culture, language, and art.

Thus Oakeshott is, in the last analysis, one of those political theorists, like Plato, who are so deeply concerned about the dangers of power, interest, conflict, that they develop a theory in which those problems are eliminated rather than solved, a theory essentially unpolitical.[151] It is not, then, that Oakeshott is naively unaware of problems of conflict or power; on the contrary, like Plato, he is so much aware and afraid of them that he cannot conceive of any way in which mere human beings could hope to control them. That is the great advantage seemingly offered by tradition: tradition is the hidden, impersonal and impartial force that will take care of these problems for us, while we remain passive and obedient to it—but not really "obedient" either, because tradition has no interests of its own and exercises no coercive power. Tradition can be active without any of the problems of action; in relation to it, human action disappears.

Of course, we are all part of tradition and express it in our activities. Everything that we do is "communal" in the sense of allowing us to promote the "collective interest" of our society and thus fulfill our "duty" to the public.[152] But politics proper, the conscious, deliberate, and collective pursuit of public goals is to be kept minimal, remedial, limited. It is the province of certain specialists called "government"; except for the duty of voting at elections, most people are not and should not be engaged in politics proper.[153] To be sure, the specialists of government should not be narrow, Rationalistic technicians; the pursuit of intimations is an art and requires a humanistic and concretely historical education. As Crick says, Oakeshott always "prefers the connoisseur to the expert."[154] But those who govern are no Burkean aristocracy either; they wield no real power, and their decisions should have no serious or widespread consequences. They look, indeed, rather like the upper ranks of the British civil service: university educated, cultivated, cautious, eminently suited to administer a civilized conversation.

Since politics proper is the restricted province of specialists, it is clear why Oakeshott is anxious to keep its power to a minimum. Why should "we" give "them" any more power to interfere with "our" lives than we absolutely have to? Freedom is the absence of such interference. What he never even considers as an alternative, is a vision in which "we" might actively and collectively govern ourselves, in which politics might be the concern of an entire, self-consciously engaged community, and freedom might consist in shared self-governing rather than protected privacy.

The alternative would be a conception of politics that accepts the reality of conflict, interest, and power, but undertakes to enlist these problematic elements in a continual reconstruction of community. That would be (as Oakeshott himself would insist) a continuing process without resting place or fixed external goal. The participants bring to the process ever newly conflicting purposes and desires, ever shifting alliances and configurations of power. But that need not make the task impossible; on the contrary, the resulting process of conflict can be used to keep alive an awareness of what is

[151] Need I say that I am not proposing that Oakeshott resembles Plato in all, or many, respects?
[152] Oakeshott, "Claims of Politics," pp. 146–147.
[153] *Ibid.*, passim. Note also Oakeshott's secondary, unpublished definition, cited in footnote 28.
[154] Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

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at stake, collectively and for each participant. This is the vision of a healthy political life developed by theorists like Tocqueville and Machiavelli: the continual transformation of private need and partial perspective into an enlarged awareness of the whole.

But this cannot be achieved without the engagement of lived experience, of genuine needs, of passion; it cannot be achieved without risk. Oakeshott rejects that risk as unacceptable because he does not think such forces can be controlled or enlisted. It seems clear to me that this is because ultimately Oakeshott believes, like Burke, that the structures of civilization are "illusions," that if people saw through them to the true realities of need and passion and force, those structures could not survive. That is why Oakeshott fails to see that what a "resident magistrate" *can* symbolize to a colonized people depends on the lived realities of what he does and of the context in which he operates. For Oakeshott, ultimately, symbols are all arbitrary; they come to us out of a tradition that we cannot fathom and should not question. It is foolish of the colonized not to accept the (admitted) illusion that the magistrate is a guardian of their liberty; only that illusion or others equally arbitrary make liberty possible.

What Oakeshott never takes seriously as a possibility is that civilization might not necessarily rest on illusions, but partly on the fulfillment of genuine human needs, so that it would be safe and even desirable to challenge those particular beliefs and institutions that are—in a given historical setting—illusions. It does not seem possible to him that the results of such political freedom might ultimately be stronger than any unexamined inheritance.

Reading Oakeshott in America today is a fascinating and ironic experience. On the one hand, he shares much with our own new conservatives: a fear of conflict and a quest for stability, a preference for minimal politics without participation or passion. On the other hand, he would surely be appalled to see a "conservatism" like ours: devoid of all tradition, contemptuous of the society's history, using its traditions of constitutional liberty only as propaganda slogans while readily sacrificing them in the name of law and order. It might well give Oakeshott pause to see how feeble are the alliances that he always takes for granted: between Rationalism and political radicalism or liberalism, between traditionalism and political conservatism. For our neoconservatives, of course, are Rationalists through and through: idolators of the technological, engineering spirit; antihistorical positivists in education and epistemology; bureaucrats in government, truly engaged in "the politics of empiricism" that sells out the future in return for present private profit or hasty accommodation to the latest civil disturbance.

Oakeshott would be disturbed, but one doubts if he could help us much. He might point out that all this is only to be expected in a nation founded in "a specific and express rejection of tradition." Or he might recall us to the Anglo-American traditions of constitutional liberty and self-government that are, after all, our own. But it seems clear that in our time, "recalling" us to such ideas, or any ideas, is not enough. In the end, traditions exist only in people; we *are* our traditions. And if we are concerned to preserve the tradition of free self-government in America—flawed and feeble as it may be—then we shall have to take the responsibility of putting that tradition into action, in relation to the real necessities of people's lives. In the end, as Oakeshott himself would insist, our problems are not his to solve, but ours. □

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LETTERS

On Skinner

Editor:

David Spitz has clearly researched B. F. Skinner, if making reference to some of his writings is a reflection of that, but it is equally clear that he has simply missed Skinner's point all along the way. Of those paragraphs throughout his article which refer to what Skinner is saying, there are very few which would not require substantial revision to bring them in line with Skinner's meaning. Thus an adequate answer to Mr. Spitz would have to be exceedingly lengthy, but, perhaps not so arbitrarily, I may sample the beginning and end of his article "The Higher Reaches of the Lower Orders" (DISSENT, Spring 1973).

One can criticize what a person is proposing as a thesis (or what one thinks is being proposed); the factual evidence upon which the proposal is based; and the conclusions which are said to emerge from the proposal. Mr. Spitz, from beginning to end, misreads Skinner's thesis; he is in absolutely no position to evaluate the evidence upon which Skinner's thesis is based (although, as if he were, he makes many derisive remarks about the scientific analysis of behavior); and so, it is not surprising that he falls far short in evaluating the conclusions to which Skinner comes. In fact, there are few conclusions Mr. Spitz states which are (or would be) Skinner's conclusions.

Mr. Spitz begins by asking a question which, in contrast to what we actually know about ourselves, has long been an intriguing one for Skinner: "What manner of men do we take ourselves and others to be?" A good part of the article by Mr. Spitz is devoted to providing a very traditional exposition of what philosophers and others have decided on that question. Mr. Spitz gives us Skinner's position at the outset—one which he characterizes as an "age-old" and "currently fashionable" answer: "that the bulk [sic] of mankind is unable or unfit to be free," from which it follows that men should be divided "into superior and inferior orders."

In the first place, the generalization is stated incorrectly for several reasons (and the conclusion is preposterous), but a most important point is that Skinner would never restrict the proposition to the "bulk" of mankind. Skinner's thesis is that the behavior of *all* people is determined by genetic factors (which have only played a token role in his analysis, because they are very poorly understood) and the environmental conditions under which behavior occurs.

There is a world of difference between Spitz's statement and what Skinner is actually saying (as big a difference as if Darwin had suggested that the "bulk" of humanity had evolved through natural selection, but that some people were exempt from the process), and many of Spitz's following remarks should be considered accordingly. In any case, historically, Skinner's thesis has *never* been taken seriously (so it is not "age-old"), and it is really only "currently fashionable" among some of those who engage in the scientific analysis of behavior.

After 27 pages of Mr. Spitz's confusion, we come to his last paragraph. The point is made that, according to Skinner's belief that behavior is determined, we can give neither credit nor blame to either Skinner or Spitz for whatever they have done, for, "As Skinner would be the first to insist, both writer and reader are behaving only as they must."

Quite so. We behave as we must. But credit and blame are given in one form or another, and that is part of the interchange between organism and environment that Skinner's thesis is all about. Mr. Spitz asks, "If, then, none of us is responsible for what we do and say, what is the point of writing, reading, reflecting upon or talking about this book" (*Beyond Freedom and Dignity*)?

What is the point? Well, I guess that's a question for philosophers to toss around. What is the "point" of anything? The discussion could become quite lengthy. In any case, we are "held responsible" for our behavior by both the nonsocial as well as the social environment, and to the extent that certain kinds of contingencies for behavior prevail, we learn to behave responsibly.

For now, let it be said that Skinner has never dispensed with the notion of *behavioral responsibility*, which is, after all Mr. Spitz's labors, apparently his final conclusion.

EDWARD S. COBB

DAVID SPITZ *replies:*

Like his master, Professor Cobb dismisses criticism on the alleged ground that it misunderstands Skinner's teaching, then repeats the very errors that criticism exposed.

I explicitly quoted Skinner as having said (1) that "a person's behavior is determined by a genetic endowment . . . and by the environmental circumstances." I explicitly noted (2) that Skinner applies this to *all* persons. But I also quoted Skinner as having said (3) that "*all* control is exerted *by the environment*," and that (4) of the programmer, as distinct from the programmed, "*He* will select goods or values which are important *to him* and arrange the kind of contingencies to which *he* can adapt" (my italics).

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Now, by whatever system of logic Professor Cobb may wish to invoke, I ask him how (1) is compatible with (3), and (2) with (4).

If the genetic factors have played only a token role in Skinner's analysis, "because they are very poorly understood," how can Skinner make any claim for them at all? If they count, we need to know how they count, and in what way. Actually, apart from bare mention, the genetic factors play not a token role but no role at all in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. So this contention is disingenuous and self-defeating.

If the programmer can select (choose) what *he* wants, in what sense is he like the programmed (the bulk of mankind), who must conform? How can *he* both choose and be determined? How can *they* not choose yet be like him?

Finally, what is the "nonsocial environment" that holds us "responsible," and how does it, how can it, do so? What does it mean to "behave responsibly"? Who is responsible to whom, for what? □

Reaching Workers

Editor:

As a regular reader of DISSENT, I have been following the debate over the "new conservatives" with a certain degree of scorn. Both Epstein and Decter advance arguments which make a crucial omission—that of how intellectuals can relate to working-class Americans. As a social studies teacher in a vocational high school, I work every day with the young people who will eventually fill America's secretarial, trades, and factory positions. I am struck by how little the dialogue of intellectuals effects and filters down to their lives. To me, these intellectuals often constitute an isolated caste whose intellectual impact upon the masses of people is negligible.

If intellectuals who want to see significant change come about, really want to see their ideas discussed and debated, they are going to have to leave their sanctuaries at least part of the time and enter the arena of the workaday world in the factories, mines, businesses, and schools where most of us spend the bulk of our lives. Intellectuals can benefit from Eugene Debs's comment that he was reluctant to be a working-class "leader" because he was afraid if people had to be led to socialism, they could just as easily be led away from it. If intellectuals were sharing their ideas on a practical day-to-day level maybe we could take positive steps forward in achieving the *self* and collective emancipation required of genuine socialism. At the very least, there is perhaps no better way for us to determine the "limits of social policy."

RICHARD G. TAYLOR □

"Free" Unions

Editor:

B. J. Widick, in his article "New Trends in the Unions," criticizes George Meany for denouncing "the British trade union movement for seeking to establish better relations with the unions of the Common Market countries, in an effort to make the voice of British unionism more powerful as England enters the EEC."

As I read the transcripts of the press conferences from the Executive Council meeting in February, Meany never said he opposes better relations between the TUC and Common Market unions. To say so is inconsistent with the record. What Meany did say, however, is that

> they [TUC] are engaged now in what I would call the Moscow-London Labor Axis and we just don't buy it. . . . They are forming a new federation in Europe, and they have, by majority vote. . . deleted the word "free" from their federation because the Russians feel that there is a connotation to the word "free" that is offensive to them.

It is *this* "new trend," which Mr. Widick ignores, that should be the real focal point of critical examination. If the word "free" is no longer an essential component of some interunion relationships, and if, in deleting the word, certain European trade union movements help give legitimacy to what in fact are not trade unions but totalitarian instruments of forced labor, than it is a trend which deserves very strong denunciation by the free trade unions around the world.

After reading Mr. Widick's article I wonder if he would condemn or justify opposition to "new relationships" between what we know as free trade unions and the Spanish syndicates?

F. STEPHEN MCARTHUR

B. J. WIDICK *replies:*

Mr. McArthur can calm down. I shall continue in the future, as I have for 35 years, to argue for the concept and practice of free trade unionism, in all countries at all times, as the best form of organization for human dignity and freedom. From this viewpoint, incidentally, have I objected for over a decade to George Meany's policy of viewing the AFL-CIO as an "arm of the United States government." (That's not free enough for me.) My major thrust in DISSENT (Summer 1973) was that George Meany couldn't have any serious influence in debating the British Trade Union Congress about policy (they are as free as U.S. unions) by insulting them in public, which he did in the presence of Vic Feathers, TUC leader, without giving them a chance to reply.

However, I wouldn't rule out a coalition of unions, irrespective of ideology, in a strike situation against a multinational corporation. I like the precedent set in the U.S.A. by George Meany,

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among others, when AFL unions—the UAW and the UE—joined in coalition-bargaining against GE in the big strike a couple of years ago. I admit the victory against GE strengthened the UE (once expelled from the CIO as a pro-Communist union) but I didn't then nor do now see this as "giving legitimacy to what in fact was not a trade union but a totalitarian instrument of forced labor." □

alliance with your own or other governments in an unjust war.

I doubt that Freiligrath would have applied his slogan to World War II, but I have little hesitation to assert that he would have invoked it for the war in Indochina, as it was invoked by the Internationalists during World War I when German militarists endeavored—not without success—to get working-class support for the war against Russian czarism.

ADOLF STURMTHAL □

Precedents

Editor:

Michael Harrington's fascinating report on his divergence of views on Vietnam with Max Shachtman (Spring 1973 issue) brings to my mind similar conflicts in the European Left more than a century ago. When Croat soldiers under the command of General Jellacic defeated the Hungarian rebellion against Hapsburg absolutism in 1849, democrats and other "left-wingers" of the time were eager to come to the assistance of the Hungarian revolutionaries. One of the great poets of the period, Ferdinand Freiligrath, deeply moved by the impending doom of his Hungarian friends, warned, however, in a beautiful poem whose culminating lines were: "To beat Jellacic, beat your own Jellacic!" (*Den Jellacic zu schlagen, schlag Deinen Jellacic!*)

What he meant to say—and what I would have said to Shachtman, had I known of his prowar views on Vietnam—was simply this: Your job is at home. That is where you have to fight your battles, especially when the struggle against foreign oppressors threatens to bring you into an unholy

Watergate

Editor:

Like many others I have long been bored and weary of the volumes of journalistic trivia concerning Watergate. The Senate hearings appear to have neither the desire nor the intention of ferreting out the truth. The aim is simply to locate a scapegoat, preferably, if possible, President Nixon. . . .

Accordingly I wish to express my appreciation of the three articles in the summer issue of DISSENT. Each of the authors, avoiding the logophilia of the professional journalist, penetrates exactly to the heart of the matter.

Especially delightful is Joseph Bensman's characterization of the corporate management group. It is the most concise and accurate description of my late uncle Sandy that I have ever read.

CURTIS S. LAUGHLIN □

IN THE MAGAZINES *(continued from page 495)*

Droz dissented, calling for separate Communist electoral activity, a policy of "class against class," Stalin backed down.)

If Draper's view is correct, we must see Bukharin as a major force in Comintern policy in the period between Zinoviev's fall in 1926 and Stalin's emergence in 1928, not as merely a pawn of Stalin's. Draper also maintains that Bukharin held a "Right" position on domestic policies in 1927–28 but a "Left" position on foreign policy, an acrobatic feat not unmatched in the annals of Marxism.

Draper acknowledges that shortly after 1928, Stalin made use of Bukharin's "Left" concepts, in extreme forms not intended by Bukharin, as in Stalin's formulation that the "Social Fascists" were the "main enemy." Nevertheless, Draper's researches buttress the position of those who view Soviet adventurism as a result not primarily of Stalin's personal instability but rather of the growing isolation and self-absorption of the developing Soviet bureaucracy.

DAVID BENSMAN □

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